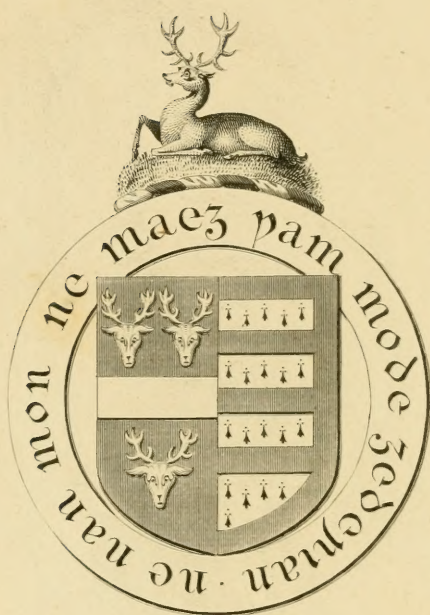


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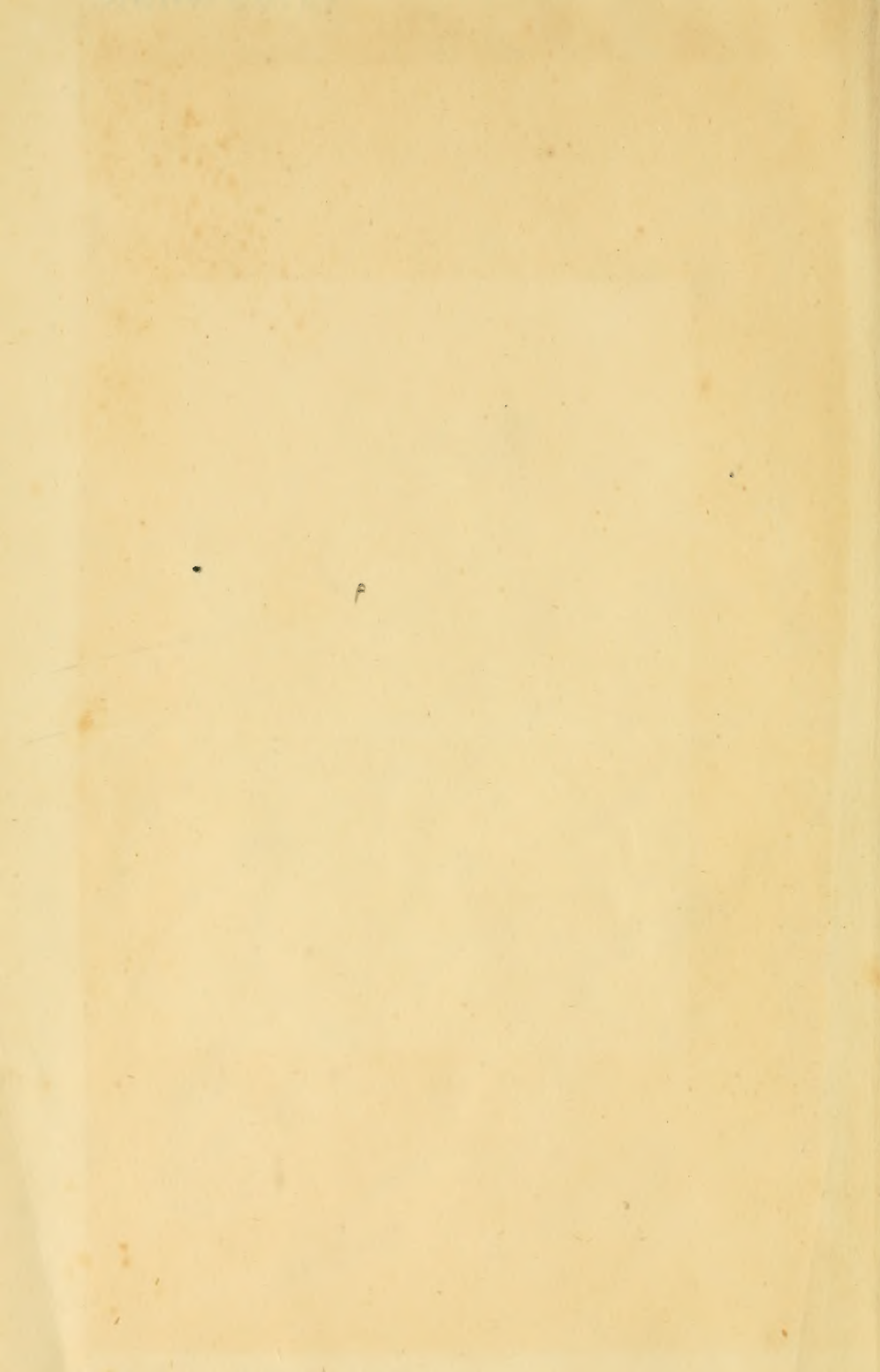


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BIRDS OF MARLBOROUGH,

BEING

A CONTRIBUTION

TO THE

ORNITHOLOGY OF THE DISTRICT,

BY

ordinand
EVERARD F. IM THURN.
III

WITH AN APPENDIX.

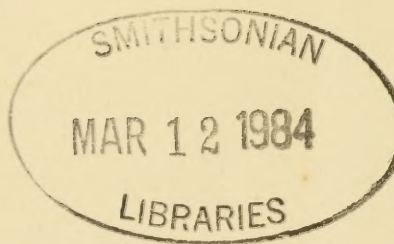
MARLBOROUGH:

PERKINS, "TIMES" OFFICE; AND LUCY, BOOKSELLER.

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MIDCCCLXX.



TO
THE REV. G. G. BRADLEY,

MASTER OF MARLBOROUGH COLLEGE,

THIS LITTLE BOOK

IS (BY PERMISSION)

DEDICATED,

AS A PROOF OF THE SINCERE REGARD AND

GOOD WISHES OF THE

AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.

It is only now, when I feel at last forced to render an account of the work which I have undertaken and have now completed, that I feel fully its many deficiencies. I have however one consolation ; I feel that I have done my best to render a tribute of gratitude to the school, where I passed so many pleasant hours, and to the Natural History Society of that school, to which, and to which alone, I owe the formation of tastes, which now prove a continual and endless source of pleasure and occupation to me.

In the hope that it may prove useful to them, I have undertaken this "labour of love."

For the information of those, either in schools or in private life, who may feel an interest in such societies, a slight sketch of the one in point may not be out of place here. In April, 1864, two or three members of the school, who had a taste for Natural History, banded themselves

together, electing the Rev. T. A. PRESTON as their president, and agreeing to meet on certain nights for consultation. Difficulties at first cropped up thickly, but scientific energy, aided by the firm support of the Rev. G. G. BRADLEY, in time overcame these. The society grew, and a year and a half after its formation published its first report. The career of the still small but thriving society brightened more and more. About the middle of 1866 the College provided a room as a museum. From that time to this no cloud of any importance has appeared on the society's horizon. It now publishes its reports half-yearly, numbers more than half a hundred members, and its collections have out-grown its museum. Such is the society to which I owe so much, and to which I have now so poorly attempted to repay a few of its benefits.

The present work is not quite the first on the subject of the Ornithology of Marlborough.

Some years ago a "Flora" of the district was published by the Rev. T. A. PRESTON, at the end of which a slight sketch of the birds was added by R. BOSWORTH SMITH, Esq. All the birds mentioned in his list appear in the present one, while a considerable number have been added.

As the title of my work only embraces the birds of Marlborough, and not those of the whole county of Wilts, it was necessary to fix some definite limits to the district.

After some deliberation I have decided on a radius of eight miles round the town of Marlborough ; for three reasons, firstly, because this is about the furthest distance, which the generality of pedestrians would accomplish in an ordinary walk, and it therefore includes all the birds which Marlburians are likely to meet with ; secondly, because that distance embraces the whole of the very interesting district of Savernake Forest ; and lastly, because the same limits will be used in the next edition of the Flora of Marlborough already alluded to.

As to the arrangement, I have adopted the very excellent, though somewhat novel division into which the "Birds of Berks and Bucks," by A. CLARKE KENNEDY, Esq., is divided.

In some cases I have experienced a slight difficulty in separating the regular from the occasional visitors, as no distinct line can be drawn between them.

The other difficulties which I have met with have been but slight, owing to the kindness and liberality of my friends, and even of many whose acquaintance I have not the pleasure of claiming.

To the Rev. A. C. SMITH, of Yatesbury, A. CLARKE KENNEDY, Esq., the Rev. T. A. PRESTON, many of the resident gentlemen, the farmers, and especially the gamekeepers, I now offer my sincere thanks.

The works from which I have quoted are but few in number, viz., the Reports of the Marlborough College Natural History Society, the Ornithology of Wilts, published in the *Wilts Archæological Magazine*, by the Rev. A. C. SMITH, and the short list in the "Flora of Marlborough" already alluded to. I can, in conclusion, only hope that the list of dates in the appendix will prove of use, though they are fewer in number than I could have wished.

EVERARD F. IM THURN.

Nov. 26th, 1869.

BIRDS OF MARLBOROUGH.

PART I.—RESIDENTS.

Falco Tinnunculus.

Kestrel.

LOCAL NAMES.

Wind Hover.

Stannel Hawk.

EGG OBSERVED.

April 21st, 1865.

April 16th, 1866.

May 3rd, 1867.

May 8th, 1868.

May 11th, 1869.

1870.

Although the Kestrel is in most places the commonest of the hawks, in this neighbourhood it only takes the second place in the ranks, the Sparrowhawk being first. It is however tolerably common, though it is one of those birds doomed to be exterminated before long through the relentless persecution of gamekeepers.

Much has been said and written lately about the cruelty of shooting and destroying parent birds during the breeding season, but no one seems to think anything about the cruelty of this kind towards Kestrels, for not long

since a writer in a well-known and much-read paper boasted that he had shot several hen Kestrels, into whose very nests he could see.

These birds have to breed in deserted nests of magpies, crows, and other birds in our neighbourhood, as there are no ruins or cliffs such as they delight in. I fancy, however, that they do not always wait till their predecessors have quitted any nest, which they may fancy, as the following anecdote will show :—

In a certain oak tree near the village of Chisledon was a nest of the common Carrion Crow, from which a companion of mine had already taken a couple of eggs, leaving the rest. As we were walking under it one day we heard a noise overhead, and on looking up beheld a fierce conflict between the Crows and a pair of Kestrels. The fight must have lasted nearly half-an-hour since we first noticed it, when the Kestrels proved victorious and drove away the poor owners of the nest. On visiting the nest some weeks afterwards, we found four hard-set Hawks' eggs, while those of the Crows had totally disappeared.

Two pure white varieties of the egg of this bird have been taken from two distinct nests.

Accipiter Nisus.

Sparrow Hawk.

EGG OBSERVED.

April 26th, 1865.

April 12th, 1866.

May 9th, 1868.

April 29th, 1869.

1870.

The boldest of all our Hawks and, as mentioned in the previous notice, in this neighbourhood the commonest. This is also one of those unfortunate birds doomed to be overcome by the war of extermination carried on against them. I have seen as many as twenty-six, nailed up in a "gamekeeper's museum," all killed during one month.

At least one pair of these birds may be found in every copse in the neighbourhood.

Amongst all the pet birds kept at the College this is perhaps the commonest. In many cases they become very tame indeed, more so than the Kestrel.

Otus vulgaris.

Long-Eared Owl.

LOCAL NAMES.	EGG OBSERVED.	YOUNG BIRD.
<i>Long-horned Owl.</i>	June 5th, 1865.	April 18th, 1866.
<i>Horned Owl.</i>	March 20th, 1869.	
	1870.	

This, our first Marlborough Owl, is not a very uncommon bird, though from its habit of keeping in the dark recesses of thick fir copses it is not often noticed. Rockley is an old habitat for it, and at one time I believed the only one. I have, however, since learnt that it is to be found in several other localities. I have had several specimens from the various fir copses on the downs, and I now believe it to be pretty generally distributed throughout the district.

The young birds and the eggs are often taken, but I am sorry to say that, with the exception of the two instances noted above, no record has been kept. It is on the whole a very early breeder.

When captured it defends itself fiercely. I have seen several throw themselves on their backs, striking out with their claws and feet, and keeping up a hissing noise all the time. One even settled on the hand of its captor, and could not be made to loosen its hold until it was killed by a blow on the head.

This is also a favourite cage bird, and will become very tame indeed.

It is noticeable in these tame specimens that they generally sit throughout the day with one eye closed, while the other is open.

Strix Flammea.

White Owl.

LOCAL NAMES.	EGG OBSERVED.	YOUNG BIRDS.
<i>Barn Owl.</i>	April 26th, 1866.	April 22nd, 1868.
<i>Screech Owl.</i>	May 8th, 1869.	
<i>Church Owl.</i>	1870.	
<i>Hissing Owl.</i>		

As it is throughout England, this is a very common species here, breeding in all the barns, Church towers, and hollow trees, though from some inexplicable reason I can only lay my hands on very few dates of their eggs or young birds.

These birds generally return year after year to their old breeding holes, rarely seeking a new one unless obliged by circumstances to do so.

They are very savage when attacked or captured, and woe to the careless hand thrust into their nests.

I have a very marked variety of this species shot in November, 1867, at Ramsbury, in which there is a very white shade prevailing in the feathers of the wings, back, and tail.

This species also is occasionally kept in confinement, but it never becomes tame, and is always ready to attack even its owner.

Syrnium Stridula.

Tawny Owl.

LOCAL NAME.	EGG OBSERVED.	YOUNG BIRDS.
<i>Brown Owl.</i>	April 12th, 1865.	April 29th, 1868.
	March 3rd, 1867.	May 10th, 1869.
	1870.	

This is the last of our resident owls and still one of the commonest, though war to the knife exists between it and the keepers.

Besides danger from the gun, this poor bird also has another enemy. Certain men living chiefly in Savernake Forest, where the bird is commonest, have become wonderfully skilled in noosing them as they come out of the hollow trees in which they live.

In a tree to the right of the grand avenue in Savernake Forest there existed in the spring of 1868, a happy family, consisting of a pair of these owls, and a pair of squirrels, both of which parties had young families in the same hollow, while lower down in the same tree was a tree-creeper's nest. In this case a mutual bond of peace seemed to have been struck.

This bird is an early breeder with us, but the above noted date, *i.e.*, the 3rd of March, is most unusually early, as there were four eggs in the nest at the time, and even supposing that they were laid at intervals of only one day between each, which with the owls is most unlikely, the first egg must have been laid on the last day of February.

Turdus Viscivorus.

Missel Thrush.

LOCAL NAMES.

Storm Cock.

Shrike Cock.

EGG OBSERVED.

April 8th, 1865.

March 28th, 1866.

April 6th, 1867.

March 16th, 1868.

March 14th, 1869.

1870.

A very abundant species, and at the same time a very useful one, from the number of insects which it destroys.

This species generally builds in the thick fir copses, or in the branches of solitary trees. A large number of nests

may be found annually at Rockley. As will be seen by the above notes, they are very early breeders. Young birds of two or three days old have been observed on the 2nd and on the 10th of April.

I imagine this bird to be a very favourite prey of the Sparrowhawk, from having observed several from which I had driven away the hawk. They were as completely plucked as if done by the most experienced poulterer.

The Wiltshire rustics have a superstition that the loud wild note of this bird uttered during a storm is a sure fore-warning of coming misfortune.

Turdus Musicus.

Song Thrush.

LOCAL NAME.

Throstle.

EGG OBSERVED.

April 3rd, 1865.

March 25th, 1866.

April 1st, 1867.

March 16th, 1868.

March 26th, 1869.

1870.

This is an exceedingly common and well-known favourite, and deservedly so, for its very musical note is perhaps unsurpassed by that of any other bird, excepting the nightingale. It also has the merit of being the earliest of our songsters, for it may be heard even in the cold bright days of January.

The nest and eggs are also a study in themselves, and always bring back to one's mind pleasant ideas of spring in the country.

It is much to be deplored that country lads do all in their power to lessen the number of these beautiful birds, by always wantonly taking and destroying their nests. Were it for no other reason, this should be prevented if possible, on account of the breach of confidence which it involves, as scarcely any other bird has become so domesticated and fearless of man, always building near our dwellings.

Turdus Merula.

Blackbird.

EGG OBSERVED.

April 10th, 1865.

March 28th, 1866.

April 4th, 1867.

April 18th, 1868.

April 6th, 1869.

1870.

Like the last a very well-known and favourite bird, and to my thinking a very handsome one. There are several birds which are liable to variation in the colour of their plumage, part or in some cases the whole of which varies

from its natural colour to white, cream colour, or brown. Perhaps this is more frequent in the Blackbird than in any other. I have several authenticated instances of the occurrence of these variations in this neighbourhood. In February, 1866, one was shown me in the flesh, which had some of the feathers at the back of the head, several of those in the right wing and in the tail pure white. Another found dead about the same time had the right cheek white, and in April of the same year one was sent me from Rockley, having a good many white feathers on the back and in the tail.

All the instances which I have as yet mentioned have been male birds, and I should say of a good age. From which I believe this variation to be more common in the male than in the female sex, though I am unable to suggest a cause. I have, however, a female specimen from Overton, which has a good many white feathers dispersed over the whole of its body.

Of course I cannot venture to give any theory of my own concerning the reason of this curious variation, but am content to believe in part the generally accepted theory that it is caused by physical weakness in one or both of the parent birds, as when one of the old birds has any white about it, the variation is generally, I believe, perpetuated in their offspring. But I am inclined also to believe that it is occasionally the effect of a bruise or of some other wound. This is well known to be the case with the hair of animals, and it might well be the same with the plumage of birds.

The egg of this species is also liable to variation from its normal marking and shape. I have in my collection two, one from a nest containing three similar eggs, found near

Swindon Reservoir in 1866, and the second from the same neighbourhood. In these cases the eggs are quite blue without any marking and perfectly round, very similar in fact to those of the Rock Thrush, only rounder. In the second case I watched the parent birds myself, and therefore know them to have been the common blackbird. In the first case I had the egg and the description from a friend on whose knowledge of birds I can implicitly rely and who believes the birds to have been our present species, though he only caught a glimpse of them.

Accentor Modularis.

Hedge Accentor.

LOCAL NAME.	EGG OBSERVED.
<i>Hedge Sparrow.</i>	April 12th, 1865.
	April 4th, 1866.
	April 7th, 1867.
	April 16th, 1869.
	1870.

This sober little bird is even commoner than it appears to be, as its shy mouselike movements help to screen it from all but the observant eye of the naturalist. It is to be found however in every hedgerow, where also may be seen an abundance of its exquisite nests and eggs during the breeding season which commences early.

It is to be regretted that we have no adequate English name for this species, the name of Hedge Accentor being too pedantic, whilst that of Hedge Sparrow causes error by leading people to confuse it with the true Sparrows.

Erythaca Rubecula.

Redbreast.

LOCAL NAME.

Robin.

EGG OBSERVED.

April 11th, 1865 (hard set).

April 2nd, 1866.

April 11th, 1867.

March 29th, 1868 (5 eggs).

April 10th, 1869.

1870.

Again a well known and an abundant species; a good songster also, but terribly pugnacious.

It seems peculiarly adapted for withstanding hard winters, for when thrushes, blackbirds, &c., are dying of cold and hunger, the robin seeks shelter in houses or out buildings, and seems perfectly happy.

At the mill, at Mildenhall, an unsuccessful attempt was made to make a wild robin rear a young canary, which was substituted for one of its own offspring. The cock bird, however, killed it at once with a blow on the head, and turned it out of the nest.

Regulus Cristatus.*Golden-Crested Regulus.*

LOCAL NAMES.

*Gold Crest.**Golden-Crested Wren.*

EGG OBSERVED.

May 13th, 1865.

April 30th, 1866.

April 28th, 1867.

May 12th, 1869.

1870.

A marvel of beauty is this exquisite little bird, and happily still very common, and likely to remain so from its quiet manners.

It abounds in all our fir copses, and may occasionally be seen in Savernake Forest. In hard winters I have noticed it within a few yards of the town of Marlborough.

This little bird, in common with the wren, has a curious habit of building several nests before it finds one to suit it. Mr. Bosworth Smith, in his list of the birds of Marlborough, mentions a case of this.

Four nests of this bird were built by one pair of birds in the clump of fir trees at the Eight Walks in Savernake Forest. Of these only the last was inhabited. The Fire-crested *Regulus* is, as far as I know, not a Marlborough bird, but it is so similar to the first species that, except when closely observed, it is quite possible for it to have escaped observation.

Parus Major.
Greater Tit.

LOCAL NAMES.

*Oæye**Tomtit*

EGG OBSERVED.

April 27th, 1865.

April 26th, 1866.

April 30th, 1867.

April 16th, 1868.

April 26th, 1869.

1870.

A very common bird is the great Tit, and I am afraid we must admit rather a mischievous one. I believe it however not to be as bad as it has been represented.

Almost every hole in the trees in Savernake Forest will be found to be occupied by a pair of these birds, unless it has been previously taken possession of by some of our other hole-building birds.

I believe that this bird has been successfully reared in a cage. I have made the attempt more than once, but never with any success.

These birds are caught in great numbers in horse-hair nooses set for them on account of the mischief they do to the young buds of fruit trees, &c.

Parus cæruleus.*Blue Tit.*

LOCAL NAME.	EGG OBSERVED.
<i>Blue Tomtit</i>	April 24th, 1865.
	April 22nd, 1866.
	April 26th, 1867.
	April 13th, 1868.
	April 24th, 1869.
	1870.

A charmingly pretty, but I am afraid also a very destructive bird. Throughout the year it may be seen in abundance, but it is most noticeable in the spring, perhaps, as it climbs among the slender branches of fruit and other trees. I have noticed it to be especially fond of the young leaf and flower buds of the common Elm.

An abundance of its nests may be found in hollow trees in the forest and elsewhere.

Parus ater.*Cole Tit.*

EGG OBSERVED.
May 13th, 1866.
May 10th, 1867.
May 30th, 1868.
May 1st, 1869.
1870.

Not so plentiful as either of the two foregoing species, and yet it is tolerably abundant, especially in Savernake Forest. For some reason I have, however, rarely noticed it myself, and have therefore been surprised to obtain so many well authenticated instances of its occurrence.

Parus palustris.*Marsh Tit.*

EGG OBSERVED.

(No records).

Let me here take another opportunity of protesting against the unmeaningness of many of our English names. Why should this bird be called the *Marsh Tit*? It certainly is not more frequent in damp places than in any others.

Mr. Bosworth Smith dismisses this species with the following short notice—"Its nest has been taken in a pollard willow at Manton."

To this I am not able to add much information. I have known the nest taken twice in the neighbourhood of Chisledon.

On the whole I suppose it to be a scarce species with us.

Parus caudatus.*Long-tailed Tit.*

LOCAL NAMES.

*Long-tailed Titmouse.**Bottle Tom.**Bottle Tit.**Long-tailed Pie.*

EGG OBSERVED.

April 24th, 1865.

April 22nd, 1866.

May 7th, 1867.

April 19th, 1868.

April 20th, 1869.

1870.

We have now come to the last of the Tits. The Long-tailed Tit, so quiet in its manners, so small, with its furry

looking feathers, is at first sight almost as much like a mouse as a bird, from which circumstance, doubtless, it acquired the name of Titmouse, which has since been applied indiscriminately to all the family.

It is very abundant in Savernake Forest, though with the rest of its family it is only observed in great numbers during the winter, as the thick foliage of the trees conceals it at other seasons.

It breeds regularly with us in large numbers, in the thorns, &c., in the forest, where very many of its beautiful nests may be seen. I have one in my collection, built in the head of an ordinary standard rose.

Motacilla Yarrellii.

Pied Wagtail.

LOCAL NAMES.

Dishwasher.

Water wagtail.

EGG OBSERVED.

April 27th, 1865.

April 24th, 1866 (hard set).

May 14th, 1867.

May 10th, 1868.

April 24th, 1869.

1870.

The Pied Wagtail is common enough with us all over the district, wherever there is any water to be found. Its nest and egg are also abundant.

In accordance with my plan of extracting the most interesting notes from the "Flora" list of Marlborough birds, the following is copied:—The situation of a nest of this bird (the Pied Wagtail) found in 1857 is so peculiar as to make it worth recording. It was placed in a fir tree at the Eight Walks (in Savernake Forest), some fifteen feet from the ground. There is no running water within three miles, and no water at all, with the exception of some small ponds which are almost dry in summer. The nest contained four fresh eggs, and the old birds were seen repeatedly in the vicinity."

Anthus pratensis.

Meadow Pipit.

LOCAL NAMES.

Tit Lark.

Cheeper.

EGG OBSERVED.

May 13th, 1865 (six eggs).

May 29th, 1866.

May 25th, 1867.

May 11th, 1868.

May 9th, 1869.

1870.

Situated as Marlborough is in the centre of the Wiltshire Down country, this bird is of course abundant throughout the year, breeding very regularly in May.

Alauda arvensis.*Skylark.*

EGG OBSERVED.

April 20th, 1865.

April 20th, 1866.

April 16th, 1867.

April 10th, 1868.

April 19th, 1869.

1870.

Which of us does not know, and does not entertain affectionate feelings towards the Skylark? Every inhabitant of Marlborough, at any rate, must know this charming songster. It is impossible to walk on our downs without seeing it, as it flits from hillock to hillock, or hearing its song, while it soars high up in the clouds.

The tufts of long grass on the downs afford it shelter for its nest.

This bird is also very regular in the time of its breeding

Emberiza miliaria.*Bunting.*

LOCAL NAMES.

*Corn Bunting.**Bunting Lark.*

EGG OBSERVED.

June 20th, 1865.

May 12th, 1866.

1870.

This bird though actually a resident with us, is much more plentiful in the winter than at any other time, num-

bers of them wintering with us, and leaving us just before the breeding season, which is generally rather late with this species.

Its nests are, however, often found, and no doubt might be so much oftener, were it not that it is generally built among growing corn, which proves a great safeguard to it.

Emberiza schœniclus.

Black-headed Bunting.

LOCAL NAMES.

Reed Bunting

Reed Sparrow.

EGG OBSERVED.

May 5th, 1865.

April 30th, 1866.

June 13th, 1867.

May 9th, 1869.

1870.

The withy beds along the Kennet afford shelter to some of these birds throughout the year, though they are certainly much diminished in numbers during the winter, increasing again as soon as the spring comes round. Their nests may always be found during the breeding season, on the ground among the oziers. They are especially abundant at Poulton.

Emberiza citrinella.*Yellow Bunting.*

LOCAL NAMES.	EGG OBSERVED.
<i>Yellow Hammer.</i>	April 17th, 1865.
<i>Yellow Ammer.</i>	April 30th, 1866.
	May 4th, 1867.
	April 15th, 1868.
	April 24th, 1869.
	1870.

Very convenient is the English name of this bird for those unfortunate persons who are in the habit of misusing a certain asperate, as from long use "Hammer" and "Ammer" have become equally correct, though if, as is most probable, it is derived from the German "Ammer," meaning "a finch," the latter pronunciation is the right one. The yellow hammer is as abundant here as it is in most localities throughout England, living in small flocks in the winter, and separating into pairs as soon as the breeding season approaches.

These birds are often very late breeders ; several instances of their nests with fresh eggs being found quite in the Autumn have occurred. One, mentioned by Mr. Bosworth Smith, as follows : " A nest of this bird was found as late as August 16th, 1858, in a small bush on the open ground, inside the deer fence, on the path from the Forest to the College." Another was taken on the 23rd of September, 1865, containing young birds. There is also another instance mentioned in the report of the Marlborough College Natural History Society, on September the 23rd, 1866.

Whether this is a mistake for the last-mentioned instance, I have no means of discovering.

From the same authority I copy the following record—

“*Emberiza Cirlus*—Cirl Bunting (egg) June 4th (1865).”

I cannot find it mentioned anywhere else, nor have I ever observed it myself, or even received any information about it. Therefore I do not feel justified in inserting it as a Marlborough species.

Fringilla cœlebs.

Chaffinch.

LOCAL NAME.

Pie Finch.

EGG OBSERVED.

April 15th, 1865.

April 20th, 1866.

April 25th, 1867.

April 26th, 1868.

April 24th, 1869.

1870.

This very common, and at the same time handsome, bird is to be seen everywhere throughout the year; the females are, however, scarce during the winter months.

Varieties of the egg of this bird, of a bright blue colour like those of the thrush, have occurred several times. One nest found by myself near Chisledon contained four eggs, three of which were of this blue shade and of the ordinary shape and size, while the fourth was also blue, but in shape more like two ordinary eggs joined together at the

smaller end. The shell of this extraordinary egg was remarkably thin and fragile in texture, so much so that it broke at the first puncture in the attempt to blow it. It contained but one yolk, which must have been situated quite at one end. I have since much regretted not having taken the dimensions of this egg.

Passer domesticus.

House Sparrow.

EGG OBSERVED.

April 17th, 1865.

April 19th, 1866 (young birds).

May 8th, 1867.

April 30th, 1868.

April 24th, 1869.

1870.

There are but few parts of England, or in fact of the world, which cannot at any rate show their Sparrows, however poor they may be in other ornithological riches. Marlborough is by no means without its share of them. They abound in fact round every barn, building, and large hedgerow, and are likely to continue common while Sparrow clubs, poisoned wheat, and other branches of this short-sighted policy do not make their appearance amongst us.

They build with us just as often in trees as in buildings, from which circumstance the general inhabitants of Marlborough say the true tree Sparrow (*P. montanus*) is to be found in the neighbourhood.

Partly or entirely Albino varieties of this bird are said to have occurred several times near Marlborough. I have however only seen two instances myself. One was picked up dead during the severe snow of March, 1867. The greater part of the feathers on the back, head, and wings are pure white, while the rest of the plumage is of the ordinary colour. The second was white all over, and was shot at Ogbourne. It was stuffed by a gamekeeper who dabbled slightly in the Taxidermist's art. It was in his possession when I saw it.

Coccothraustes chloris.

Greenfinch.

LOCAL NAMES.

Green Linnet.

EGG OBSERVED.

May 3rd, 1865.

May 26th, 1866.

April 30th, 1867.

May 8th, 1868.

April 19th, 1869.

1870.

Flocks of these birds may be seen during the winter mingled with Chaffinches, Sparrows, &c. They disperse in the spring, breeding abundantly in the neighbourhood.

I have not included under the head of "Local names," the word Grosbeak, though I am inclined to think that this is the bird meant by the Wiltshire labourers, &c., from whom I have often heard of Grosbeaks being found near Marlborough.

Carduelis elegans.*Goldfinch.*

EGG OBSERVED.

May 13th, 1865.

April 26th, 1866.

May 3rd, 1867.

May 21st, 1868.

May 10th, 1869.

1870.

I suppose this bird must be classed as a resident with us, though it is by no means common. It is most capricious in its appearance, numbers of them appear suddenly, staying a short time and then disappearing. It will be seen, however, from the notes at the head of this that a few remain with us to breed yearly.

Their nests are, I am sorry to say, but very seldom left undisturbed, as the young are always taken for cage birds.

Linota cannabina.*Linnet.*

LOCAL NAMES.

*Common Linnet.**Red Linnet.**Grey Linnet.**Brown Linnet.**Greater Redpole.*

EGG OBSERVED.

April 25th, 1865.

April 14th, 1866.

April 25th, 1867.

May 8th, 1868.

April 25th, 1869.

1870.

This is a common bird, and a bird of many names, which create a certain confusion concerning it. These birds breed in large numbers on our downs, whence the young are often taken and successfully reared as cage birds.

Pyrrhula vulgaris.

Bullfinch.

LOCAL NAME.

Hoop.

EGG OBSERVED.

May 7th, 1865.

April 28th, 1866.

May 13th, 1869.

1870.

This remarkably handsome bird is unfortunately shy and prefers a warm sheltered country; we have therefore very few of them in this neighbourhood. Those that there are are always to be found in the copses and thick hedge-rows.

I have found that with us they pair very much earlier than they are generally said to do, having often noticed them in pairs in February and March. Two pairs in my collection were both shot in February.

Sturnus vulgaris.*Starling.*

EGG OBSERVED.

April 24th, 1865.

April 17th, 1866.

April 24th, 1867.

April 18th, 1868.

April 19th, 1869.

1870.

This is certainly one of our characteristic birds, breeding by thousands in the hollow trees of Savernake Forest.

After the breeding season these birds assemble in flocks, which frequent the fields, withy-beds, &c.

White varieties of the egg of this species are by no means uncommon.

Corvus corone.*Carion Crow.*

EGG OBSERVED.

May 12th, 1865.

May 12th, 1866.

April 5th, 1867.

1870.

“A pair of these birds may be found during the breeding season in almost every spruce-fir plantation round Marl-

borough; Long Copse and Four-Mile Copse are favourite resorts. The nest is also frequently found in the highest trees in the beech avenues of the Forest," says Mr. Bosworth Smith.

I have never seen more than two of these birds at a time, and never found two nests close together, so that it appears to be a most unsociable bird, unlike its near relation, the Rook.

Corvus frugilegus.

Rook.

EGG OBSERVED.

March 19th, 1866.

March 29th, 1867.

March 17th, 1868.

March 12th, 1869.

1870.

This bird is almost as domesticated and almost as much private property as ones barn-door fowls, simply because certain people on whose land they have chanced to establish their colonies, choose to consider Rook-shooting sport!

They are very early breeders, perhaps the first of all. Much has been written lately on the question of whether rooks renew their old nests yearly or build fresh ones. The rookery in the "Wilderness" of the College was just under

my window, from which I had, therefore, unusual opportunities of observing them. For my own part I am convinced that they use the last year's nest as a basis for the new one.

I have at various times observed a rook with several white feathers in its wing, belonging to the rookery near the village of Kennet, not far from Silbury.

Corvus monedula.

Jackdaw.

EGG OBSERVED.

April 11th, 1865.

April 15th, 1866.

April 20th, 1867.

April 13th, 1868.

April 22nd, 1869.

1870.

The Jackdaw is another of our common forest birds, to which the hollow trees in the grand old beech avenues afford such abundant shelter.

The egg of this species is very liable to variation from the ordinary colour to pure white, cream colour, or drab. I have two white ones in my collection, taken in April, 1868, at Ramsbury.

There is one curious habit of this bird almost peculiar to this neighbourhood. They build in the branches of the thick fir trees in Rockly copse, where they use the same nest year after year, adding to it annually till some of them have obtained an immense size.

Pica caudata.*Magpie.*

EGG OBSERVED.

April 8th, 1865.

April 2nd, 1866.

April 13th, 1867.

April 18th, 1868.

April 22nd, 1869.

1870.

The Magpie may be seen in abundance in all the tall hedgerows and copses near Marlborough, and occasionally even in the Forest, while its cumbrous domed nests may be seen for a long distance in the winter.

The deserted nests are generally occupied by a kestrel or sparrow hawk.

The old myth of the existence of two species—*i.e.*, the “Bush Magpie” and the “Tree Magpie,” is still firmly believed in here.

I may perhaps be excused if I take this opportunity of recording a very curious variety of this bird, now in my collection, even though it was not obtained in Wiltshire. The bird alluded to is of a beautiful brownish cream colour all over, including the beak. This bird was shot in November, 1868, near the town of Oxford.

Garrulus glandarius.

Jay.

EGG OBSERVED.

April 26th, 1865.

April 18th, 1866.

April 20th, 1867.

April 20th, 1869:

1870.

What a pity that this handsome bird comes under the fated class of "Vermin"! If it were not so our eyes would be gladdened by the sight of its brilliant, yet exquisitely blended colours, in every wood and tree. As it is they are abundant, more so perhaps at Marlborough than in most districts, as the large extent of Forest and wood land affords them abundant shelter even from the ruthless hand of the gamekeeper.

During the winter of 1867 I wished to procure a nice pair of jays' skins for my collection, and for that reason I applied to the gamekeepers. Bitterly did I repent of this step however! Within a few days I had received no less than thirty seven recently-killed specimens from one keeper alone, all shot in the West Woods.

The nest is abundant in the West Woods, in the beech trees of the Forest, at Rabley, and in most of the thick high hedgerows.

Picus viridis.*Green Woodpecker.*

LOCAL NAMES.

*Popinjay.**Rainbird.*

EGG OBSERVED.

May 27th, 1866.

May 18th, 1868.

May 10th, 1869.

1870.

This handsome and striking bird is, perhaps, commoner in Savernake Forest than in any other part of England, owing to the number of its beech avenues for which it has a decided preference. Yet, on account of its shy habits, it is oftener heard tapping against the trees or uttering its wild laugh. If the tree from which these sounds are heard be approached with care, so as not to frighten the bird, it is most interesting to watch its peculiar method of feeding. The wood is perforated by the beak which is very strong and of a horny substance, wedge-shaped at the tip. The tongue, which is of an extraordinary length, is then inserted with marvellous rapidity—so quickly, indeed, that the eye can scarcely follow it, and the insects, &c., are seized and very soon disposed of.

Its eggs are placed in a cavity in a tree, excavated on purpose for them, by its same useful members, *i.e.*, the tongue and beak. The entrance hole is always as true a circle as if it had been made by a pair of compasses. This hole is generally found at a considerable height above the ground, though this is not always the case, as in an instance mentioned by Mr. Bosworth Smith, which, as it also gives an interesting account of the attachment of this bird to its nest, I will give in his own words. Of the Green Woodpecker he says “Its nest or rather its eggs are occasionally

placed within a few yards of the ground. This was the case with one that laid its eggs in a beech tree in the Grand Avenue in 1858. The attachment of this bird to its nest was so extraordinary as to be worth recording. The nest was first discovered and cut open on the fifth of May, and the old bird was caught in the hole and handled for some minutes, but there were no eggs; a fortnight afterwards the hole was found to have been deepened by nearly a foot, and on its being again enlarged with a hatchet, the bird was again caught, but still there were no eggs. The bird, however, still retained her affection for the tree, eggs were discovered on the 20th, and the appearance of the hole after the Midsummer holidays gave satisfactory proof that a young family of woodpeckers had been reared therein. Since then the hole has been occupied successively by a Nuthatch, a Starling, a great Tit, and a Blue Tit."

As to the last sentence in this extract, I have observed that old woodpecker's holes form the foundation at least of the greater proportion of the very numerous breeding holes of the various tree-building birds of our grand old Forest.

Some acquaintances of mine once took some young woodpeckers of this species and tried to bring them up by hand. These birds, five in number, were allowed the range of a large outbuilding, in which there was a great deal of old wood work, up which they used to climb, uttering all the time that unearthly startling shriek peculiar to them. They were kept alive and well for about a month, after which they "went the way of all pets."

I am sorry to say there are certain men in the Forest who have become greatly skilled in noosing these birds, thus wantonly destroying an immense number. This is to be

the more regretted as they are so perfectly harmless and in fact useful, for they cut the rotten parts out of the growing timber, thus saving the rest. It seems to me that it would be worth while for the head keeper of the Forest to do his best to put a stop to this practice.

Certhia familiaris.

Creeper.

LOCAL NAMES.

Tree Climber.

Tree Creeper.

EGG OBSERVED.

April 28th, 1865.

April 26th, 1866.

May 20th, 1867.

May 4th, 1868.

May 1st, 1869.

1870.

A very pretty quiet little bird, and very much the colour of the bark of trees, and therefore not much noticed, though it is a common enough species. It may be seen any day by a careful observer, climbing up a tree in search of its food, like a miniature woodpecker, which bird it resembles in more than one particular. It is often stated that the Creeper is of so timid a nature, that a blow with a stout stick on the foot of the tree on which one of them happens to be climbing, is sufficient to paralyze it with fear. But though I have often tried the experiment, I never found it to have that result.

The nest is built amongst the thick stems of ivy growing up trees or behind a loose piece of bark, and is composed of chips of rotten wood and hay lined with a few feathers very roughly put together.

Troglodytes vulgaris.

Wren.

LOCAL NAMES.

Common Wren.

Jenny Wren.

EGG OBSERVED.

May 3rd, 1865.

April 28th, 1866.

May 2nd, 1867.

May 1st, 1868.

May 4th, 1869.

1870.

The scientific name of this little bird is so alarming, that it seems almost as if ornithologists had determined to give it a long name, to make amends to it for its very small size. Though they may not recognise it under such a long name, most people know and entertain a feeling of affection towards "Jenny" Wren, beside which it has so many other little nicknames, so to speak, as to prove it at once to be a general favourite. The nest of the wren is placed sometimes against a moss-grown tree, against a bank or the wall of a building, in ivy, amongst dead bracken, and in many other like situations. But wherever it may be, the materials of which it is composed are sure to correspond with the

substance which forms the background. For example—I have taken their nests from the moss-grown sides of trees, in which case the nest was of moss; from a mass of ivy and dead leaves, in which it was composed of dead leaves; and from dead bracken. This last nest is one of the prettiest I ever saw; it is composed entirely of the preceding year's fronds of bracken, and is lined with hundreds of feathers.

These birds have a curious habit of building, during the hard winter as a shelter for themselves, nests similar to those which they build for their young, only without the lining. These nests are always built in the most sheltered parts. A deep well-sheltered lane leading from the Pewsey road into the town of Marlborough, is a favourite place for them. I have seen no less than five in it at one time.

Sitta europæa.

Nuthatch.

EGG OBSERVED.

April 28th, 1865.

May 14th, 1866.

May 11th, 1869.

1870.

This bird is not rare in the Forest, and yet it is not very common. The nests are found every year, in hollow trees and other similar places and a walk in the Forest will always show one or two, but they are by no means as common as those of many of our other birds.

Alcedo ispida.*Kingfisher.*

EGG OBSERVED.

May 24th, 1867.

1870.

Though the colours of the plumage of this bird are as bright and vivid, perhaps even more so, than those of any other tolerably common English bird, I am inclined to dispute the general theory which awards the palm for beauty to this bird. Its form is by no means elegant, and I think that such birds as the Lapwing, the Jay, and the Bullfinch, which unite beauty of colour to that of form, have at any rate an equal claim to the post of honour.

It is by no means such an uncommon bird with us as it is supposed to be, an abundance may be seen on the banks of the more unfrequented parts of the river, and I believe their nests also to be common, though often difficult to find and to get at when found.

They do not always build close to the water. One instance is mentioned in the "Flora" list of birds in which the nest was built in one of the clay pits at the top of the Forest Hill, near the Salisbury road, which is at least a mile from any running water. Another was found in 1867 at the top of the White Horse Hill. On account of the nature of its food and nest, which is built of the indigestible portion of its prey, the nesting hole of the kingfisher has a most overpowering and disagreeable smell.

Columba palumbus.*Ring Dove.*

LOCAL NAME.

Woodpigeon.

EGG OBSERVED.

March 10th, 1865.

April 18th, 1866, (hard set).

April 9th, 1867.

April 12th, 1869.

1870.

This is at all events a common species, and may be seen in great abundance in all the copses and in the Forest.

Their nests abound in the fir trees in Rockley Copse. In the winter these birds collect in large flocks, at which time they are shot in large numbers and fetch about sixpence each in the market.

The amount of green food in the crops of these winter-killed birds is something marvellous, so much so indeed, that it seems as if it were almost impossible for the crop to hold it all.

Columba ænas.*Stock Dove.*

EGG OBSERVED.

April 11th, 1865.

April 10th, 1866.

April 16th, 1867.

March 21st, 1868.

April 20th, 1869.

1870.

The Stock Dove is not quite so numerous as the last mentioned species, but yet not far from it.

They breed in the holes of trees, chiefly in the Forest. In the winter they congregate with the Ring Dove.

Phasianus colchicus.

Pheasant.

EGG OBSERVED.

May 23rd, 1865.

April 29th, 1866.

May 16th, 1867.

May 5th, 1868.

. 1870.

This splendid Asiatic bird has become so thoroughly naturalized and proved so perfectly hardy in England that it must be included in every catalogue of British birds.

It is so often bred in confinement and then turned out, that we have a great many different varieties and hybrids, several of which may be found in and round Savernake Forest. Through the kindness of Mr. Gauntlett, the head keeper, fine specimens of some of these have been placed in the College museum. One of them is the "Ringed," or "Barbary," which differs only from the common in having a ring of white feathers round its neck.

There is also a fine pair of "Pied" pheasants, a hybrid between the common and the white species, which latter is itself an inhabitant of the forest.

On the third of March, 1866, I found a pheasant's nest containing three eggs, in rather a curious position: it was placed on the top of a large pollard willow, overhanging the water.

Perdix cinerea.

Partridge.

EGG OBSERVED.

May 23rd, 1865.

April 2nd, 1866.

May 2nd, 1868.

1870.

Such a well-known bird that it is almost difficult to find anything to say about it, which has not been said already hundreds of times.

As their habits fit them especially for arable land, they are of course abundant here.

A white variety of the partridge is said to have been shot at Devizes in the autumn of 1868.

Vanellus cristatus.

Peewit.

LOCAL NAMES.

Lapwing

Common Plover

EGG OBSERVED.

April 20th, 1865 (hard set).

April 27th, 1866 (young birds).

April 13th, 1867.

March 28th, 1868.

April 14th, 1869.

1870.

This handsome species is abundant on all our open downs, where they breed.

Though a few of them remain with us all the year round, the greater part leave us during the winter, returning about the end of February or the beginning of March. Those few, which remain, leave the downs for the water-meadows.

This bird is a very early breeder with us ; it is but seldom a fresh egg can be found after the beginning of April. The egg itself is very pointed at one end, exhibiting one of the most singular instances of instinct, for the bird always arranges its four eggs with the small ends inwards, pointing towards a common centre, thus taking up but very little room and preventing the eggs from rolling out of the very slight hollow in which they are laid.

The apparent audacity of the Peewit, in defence of its young is something marvellous, it appears to hurl itself at you and make severe attacks one after the other.

Ardea cinerea.*Heron.*

LOCAL NAME.

Hern.

This is still a common and tolerably plentiful species, though it is certainly very much rarer now than it has been.

In this neighbourhood they may be seen almost any day flying over.

The only Heronry near Marlborough is the one at Bowood, the seat of the Marquis of Lansdowne.

Gallinula chloropus.*Moorhen.*

LOCAL NAMES.

*Marsh Hen.**Water Hen.*

EGG OBSERVED.

April 15th, 1865.

April 11th, 1866.

April 9th, 1867.

April 4th, 1868.

April 9th, 1869.

1870.

To almost everyone the Moorhen is a familiar bird; indeed, living as it does on the banks of all rivers, lakes, and ponds, it must be observed by all except the inhabitants of the centre of large towns. In our part of Wiltshire, which, though it can boast of no large sheets of water, still abounds in small water courses, such as the Moorhen delights in, it may be seen feeding in flocks of a score or so in the winter and in pairs at other times.

Fulica atra.*Bald Coot.*

EGG OBSERVED.

May 31st, 1865.

May 4th, 1866.

1870.

Though this is not at all a rare bird in many parts of England, it certainly is far from common in this neighbourhood, owing most probably to the absence of large sheets of water such as the Coot generally frequents. There are perhaps only two such spots in the district, viz., Swindon reservoir and the artificial water in Ramsbury Chase. At the first of these places the Coot is certainly a resident in some numbers, and it is chiefly on account of that, that I have included it in the present section of my little work. At Ramsbury two or three nests are most probably built every season, but there are but few birds.

Now and then, generally in the winter, specimens are observed in the water meadows close by Marlborough, especially those at Mildenhall. The two specimens now in the College Museum were both shot in this last mentioned locality one in 1866, and the other in February 1868.

Podiceps minor.*Little Grebe.*

LOCAL NAMES.

*Dabchick**Didapper**Dipper**Sea Woodcock (!)*

EGG OBSERVED.

April 29th, 1865.

April 26th, 1866.

April 23rd, 1867.

April 11th, 1868.

April 7th, 1869.

1870.

This only tolerably common representative of the Grebe family remains with us all the year round, and breeds in most of the osier beds. It is, however, often regarded as rather a rare bird, I suppose on account of its diving so quickly at the least alarm, that it is difficult to obtain a good sight of it.

The last in the rather long list of country names is rather a peculiar one. Connected with it is the following anecdote, which I have from a gamekeeper, a native of Aldbourne, and a firm believer in the fact that "sea woodcock" is the scientific name of this bird. A little grebe appeared in a farm yard pond at Aldbourne. No one knew what this, as they supposed, "rara avis" was; a bedridden old man, who was supposed to be possessed of a good deal of ornithological knowledge, was accordingly wheeled out in his arm chair to give his opinion. A good deal of hesitation ensued, and the "man of science" at last pronounced it a "sea woodcock," and by this name it has since been known.

This bird, at first sight, would seem to be incapable of walking on dry land. I have, however, during very severe weather, seen them leave the water in search of food.

PART II.—SUMMER VISITORS.

Lanius collurio.*Red-backed Shrike.*

LOCAL NAME.	FIRST SEEN.	EGG OBSERVED.
<i>Butcher bird.</i>	April 10th, 1865.	May 22nd, 1865. May 6th, 1866. May 29th, 1867. May 27th, 1869. 1870.

This is not a very abundant species with us, though several pairs may be seen annually. They seem to have a particular affection for the same spot: one pair at least, and often more, may be seen every year in a small clump of fir trees to the left of the Swindon road, just before it passes through Ogbourne St. Andrew. Their nests have also been found in the Forest.

This is the only representative of the Shrikes which ever visits us.

Muscicapa griseola.*Spotted Flycatcher.*

FIRST SEEN.	EGG OBSERVED.
May 19th, 1865.	May 23rd, 1865. June 2nd, 1867 (young birds). May 30th, 1868 (young birds). May 27th, 1869. 1870.

This is not a very common species here. I fancy it is fonder of walls and trained fruit trees than of our open country.

It is very much to be regretted that the College Natural History Society have not taken more abundant notices of the first arrival of migrants. I have, perhaps, but little right to say this, as I feel that when I held the post of head of the ornithological section, I did not sufficiently impress the importance of this on the members of my section. I hope, however, that my successors will pardon me this remark, and do their best to rectify my error.

Turdus torquatus.

Ring Ouzel.

FIRST SEEN.

April 10th, 1865.

April 17th, 1868.

EGG OBSERVED.

April 30th, 1866.

May 4th, 1868.

1870.

A few specimens of this bird visit us every summer, just sufficient to warrant my including it among our regular visitors. It is possible that their eggs have been observed much oftener during the last four years than would appear from the above list; but as the egg is so similar to that of the common Blackbird (*T. Merula*) only those instances have been recorded where the bird itself has been observed to fly off the nest.

The nest taken in 1868 was built on the ground at the bottom of a hollow pollard willow by the side of the Kennet, not far from Ogbourne St. Andrew.

I have also observed it several times in the Mildenhall water-meadows.

Phœnicura ruticilla.

Redstart.

LOCAL NAME.	FIRST SEEN.	EGG OBSERVED.
<i>Redtail.</i>	April 28th, 1865.	May 3rd, 1866.
	April 1st, 1867.	April 29th, 1867..
	April 13th, 1868.	May 4th, 1868.
		April 29th, 1869. 1870.

This very handsome bird arrives at Marlborough in large numbers about the beginning or middle of April, and immediately commences the work of nidification.

It frequents large hedgerows, copses, and occasionally even the open downs if there are any thorn or other bushes near.

Saxicola rubicola.

Stonechat.

LOCAL NAME.	FIRST SEEN.	EGG OBSERVED.
<i>Horse Matcher.</i>	April 7th, 1868.	April 28th, 1866.
		May 14th, 1868.
		April 25th, 1869.
		1870.

The Stonechat is certainly only a summer visitor with us, though it is said to be a resident in many parts of the country.

Our Marlborough downs, thickly sprinkled with Grey-Wethers and with stunted thorn bushes, offer great attractions to this and the two following species. There are, therefore, an abundance of them, though from some unknown cause the records concerning them are but few.

From whence the derivation of the name Horse Matcher is obtained I am unable to say ; I have never heard it out of Wiltshire.

Saxicola rubetra.

Whinchat.

LOCAL NAME.	EGG OBSERVED.
<i>Furze Chat.</i>	May 22nd, 1865.
	May 16th, 1866.
	June 13th, 1867.
	April 24th, 1869.
	1870.

On the downs towards Overton lies a deep valley of great geological and archæological interest, for it is full of Grey-Wethers, and it also possesses the cromlech locally called the "Devil's Den." Among the boulders are thorns, brambles, &c. Here the three species, the Stonechat, Whinchat, and Wheatear may be seen in abundance.

Saxicola œnanthe.*Wheatear.*

FIRST SEEN.

March 27th, 1867.

March 28th, 1868.

April 8th, 1869.

EGG OBSERVED.

May 14th, 1866.

May 19th, 1869.

1870.

This being the commonest of our three species of *Saxicola*, I cannot account for the scarcity of dates of arrival and oviposition.

Salicaria locustella.*Grasshopper Warbler.*

EGG OBSERVED.

May 23rd, 1865.

May 30th, 1866 (hard set).

May 28th, 1867.

1870.

“Rare, but not nearly so rare as it seems, owing to the shy habits of the bird and the care it takes to conceal its nest. Its eggs have been taken on Clench Common and on the Aldbourne downs, where its single monotonous note may be heard almost incessantly during spring and summer.”—*Extract from the Flora of Marlborough.*

I have never come across this bird myself in this neighbourhood, and have therefore given the above extract, from which, and from the following, taken from the reports of

the College Natural History Society, I conclude that it is abundant in some years.

Grasshopper Warbler, (egg) May 23rd, W. Blaker. Three more nests taken. 1865.

Grasshopper Warbler, (egg), May 30th, hard set, E. H. Carr, R. B. Hamilton. Several other nests after this. 1866.

Grasshopper Warbler, heard March 26th, F. J. H. Jenkinson, egg May 28th, 1867.

Salicaria phragmitis.

Sedge Warbler.

EGG OBSERVED.

May 12th, 1865.

April 30th, 1866.

May 12th, 1867.

April 25th 1868.

May 23rd, 1869.

1870.

After some consideration I have determined on inserting this in the present section, as though Mr. Bosworth Smith records its "having been seen in both December and February at Marlborough," the generality of ornithological authors have declared it to be a migrant, and these must therefore have been exceptional instances.

This bird has a wonderful power of mocking the notes of other birds. Some years ago a request came from some people living in the town of Marlborough, through which

the river Kennet runs, for some of the ornithologists of the College Society to come and give their opinion of a "mocking bird" which visited them every year, copying closely the notes of various birds. Accordingly the Rev. T. A. Preston and some others went and discovered it to be a common Sedge Warbler.

Salicaria arundinacea.

Reed Warbler.

LOCAL NAMES.	EGG OBSERVED.
<i>Reed Sparrow.</i>	June 7th, 1867.
<i>Water Sparrow.</i>	May 15th, 1868.
	May 27th, 1869.
	1870.

The Reed warbler is by no means as common a bird with us as the last mentioned species, though it is very generally distributed throughout the whole district. It is perhaps more abundant near Poulton than anywhere else.

Curruca atricapilla.

Blackcap.

LOCAL NAME.	FIRST OBSERVED.	EGG OBSERVED.
<i>Small nightingale.</i>	April 22nd, 1868.	May 5th, 1866.
		May 8th, 1868.
		May 8th, 1869.
		1870.

This is neither a rare, nor yet a very common, species with us. It inhabits and breeds in nearly all the copses, and one pair or more may always be seen on the "Mount" behind the College buildings.

The note of the Blackcap is exceedingly sweet, and occasionally not unlike that of the Nightingale, for which it is certainly often mistaken.

Curruca hortensis.

Garden Warbler.

EGG OBSERVED.

May 25th, 1865.

May 26th, 1866.

May 15th, 1869.

1870.

This bird, very similar to the last in general appearance, is far from being as common as the Blackcap. Scarcely a year passes, however, without its being observed or its nest being found.

It seems to be more frequent in Savernake Forest than in any other part of the district.

Three years ago a pair built their nest and reared their young in a box-tree in the garden attached to the College.

Curruca cinerea.*White-throat.*

LOCAL NAME.	FIRST SEEN.	EGG OBSERVED.
<i>Nettle-creeper.</i>	May 5th, 1868.	May 2nd, 1865.
		May 11th, 1866.
		May 15th, 1867.
		May 19th, 1868.
		May 16th, 1869.
		1870.

This is the commonest of all our Warblers, and may be found almost everywhere, except on the open downs, and even there its nest has been found among the low bushes and hedges.

I have taken a nest of this bird supported half way up the stems of three nettles, in which position I believe it is not uncommon.

Curruca sylviella.*Lesser White-throat.*

EGG OBSERVED.
May 13th, 1865.
May 15th, 1866.
May 24th, 1867.
May 14th, 1869.
1870.

I know nothing of this as a Marlborough bird, and can only quote the following passage from the "Flora":—

“Lesser White-throat.—Rare. Its eggs have been taken, however, in the outskirts of the Forest, and in some brambles near Martinsell.”

The above-mentioned dates of oviposition are given on the authority of the Natural History Society's report.

Sylvia sylvicola.

Wood Warbler.

FIRST SEEN.

May 6th, 1868.

EGG OBSERVED.

May 26th, 1865.

May 14th, 1866.

May 18th, 1868.

May 21st, 1869.

1870.

The Wood Warbler is not so common as either of the two following species, but is nevertheless not very rare.

It resides chiefly in the Forest, but has been heard and seen in the West Woods.

Sylvia trochilus.

Willow Warbler.

LOCAL NAME.

Yellow Wren.

Willow Wren.

FIRST SEEN.

April 15th, 1867.

April 21st, 1868.

April 11th, 1869.

EGG OBSERVED.

May 14th, 1865.

May 15th, 1866.

May 10th, 1867.

May 4th, 1868.

May 12th, 1869.

1870.

This bird is very frequent in the willows and other trees near any water.

The following is an extract from the often quoted "Flora":—"Willow warbler. Its nest is said by Yarrell to be always placed on the ground; this does not seem, however, to be generally the case. It is commonly found in a low bush, and in one instance a nest was taken in some laurel bushes twelve feet from the ground."

With this I do not agree; my own observations convince me that the usual position of the nest is on the ground, and that those built in trees are exceptions to the rule. It is to be regretted that no further particulars are given of the nest built in the laurel bushes, as that seems to me a most remarkable situation; when they are in trees I have generally found them in pollards or on stumps, and never in bushes.

As varieties of common birds are always interesting, I take the liberty of recording here a pure white variety of the Willow Wren, now in my collection. It is a young bird of the year, but the person from whom I had it had lost all records of its locality.

Sylvia rufa.

Chiffchaff.

LOCAL NAME.	FIRST SEEN.	EGG OBSERVED.
<i>Lesser Pettychaps.</i>	April 20th, 1866.	May 18th, 1867.
	March 29th, 1868.	May 10th, 1869.
		1870.

This bird is at first sight not unlike the last in general appearance, and is quite as common. It also has a preference for willows and such plants as grow near water, but is much more frequently observed at a distance from water than is the Willow Warbler.

Its nest is placed on the ground among moss, bracken, and other suitable plants. I know of no instance of the nest of this bird being built at any distance from the ground.

Motacilla rayi.

Ray's Wagtail.

LOCAL NAME.

Yellow Wagtail.

A few pairs of these birds visit us every summer, but I cannot believe it to be, as has been asserted, a common bird.

Mr. Smith mentions a pair which for several summers visited the first field on the way to Savernake Forest from the College.

There is not a single record of this bird breeding with us, and but one of its first arrival.

Seen April 24th, 1869.

Anthus arboreus.*Tree Pipit.*

EGG OBSERVED.

May 23rd, 1865.

May 16th, 1866.

April 25th, 1867.

May 22nd, 1869.

1870.

This is a tolerably abundant species with us. It is principally remarkable for the variability in the colouring of its eggs, of which four very distinct varieties taken in this district are recorded.

1. A uniform brown colour.
2. A greyish ground, mottled all over with purple spots.
3. A whitish ground and large red blotches, exactly similar to some handsome varieties of the spotted Fly-catcher.
4. A pure white ground without any markings.

Yunx torquilla.*Wryneck*

LOCAL NAMES.

*Cuckoo's mate.**Snake bird.*

This is by no means a common bird in this district, but a few undoubtedly come to us yearly. It "has been seen

at Oare, and its eggs have been taken in the Forest." It is in the latter locality that I have generally seen it myself. A specimen in my collection was shot amongst a flock of sparrows, which, from its unsocial nature, seems to be rather a peculiar companionship.

As its nest has never been observed, it is doubtful whether it breeds here.

Cuculus canorus.

Cuckoo.

FIRST HEARD.	FIRST SEEN.	EGG OBSERVED.
April 8th, 1865.	April 12th, 1865.	May 15th, 1866.
April 11th, 1866.	April 8th, 1868.	May 19th, 1867.
April 18th, 1867.	April 14th, 1869.	May 8th, 1868.
		May 13th, 1869.
		1870.

Of all the many marvels which present themselves to the ornithological student, the life history of the Cuckoo is the most marvellous. Accordingly more has been written about this bird than about any other, without having cleared much of the mystery connected with it. In Wiltshire the cuckoo is abundant, as indeed it is in most parts of England, though it is a bird whose shy habits cause it to be little known by sight. There is a very prevalent Wiltshire superstition that the Cuckoo is really a resident, only that it changes to a hawk in the winter.

I am sorry to say no records have been kept of the different nests in which Cuckoo's eggs (or young birds) have been found. The only ones I know from personal experience are,

the Sedge Warbler, Black-headed Bunting, Meadow Pipit, and Hedge Sparrow.

The last mentioned instance was a young bird, which was taken and afterwards given to me. Unfortunately I was then going abroad, and though it lived I had for some time no opportunity of observing its habits. When I returned, it had already become reconciled to captivity. Its appetite was insatiable, for it was supplied all day long with grubs, finely cut-up meat, and hard-boiled egg, and yet it never seemed satisfied. It was also rather savage and would attack with its beak whatever was thrust into its cage.

This bird lived for some four months in this way, and then died, in spite of the greatest care taken of it.

Hirundo rustica.

Swallow.

LOCAL NAMES.	FIRST SEEN.	EGG OBSERVED.
<i>Chimney Swallow.</i>	March 28th, 1865.	April 2nd, 1865.
<i>Common Swallow.</i>	April 1st, 1866.	June 10th, 1866.
	March 25th, 1867.	May 15th, 1867.
	April 3rd, 1868.	May 29th, 1869.
	April 8th, 1869.	
	1870.	1870.

I feel convinced that the above dates of the first observation of the Swallow, are those of its first arrival at Marlborough; those of the first egg, however, are so very

different, that I cannot help thinking them not quite so useful.

The immense flocks of these birds which arrive at Marlborough separate into pairs and take up their residence in buildings and similar places. For a month before their departure they generally roost in the withy beds near the Kennet.

This habit of retiring to the neighbourhood of water just before their departure, must have given rise to the tradition that they buried themselves under water during the winter.

A pure white variety of the Swallow was shot at Ramsbury in the summer of 1868, and was stuffed by a game-keeper, named Rushen, in whose hands I saw it.

The following are the dates of the last observance of the Swallow :—

Left Marlborough, September 27th; occasional birds seen October 1st, 21st, 26th, and 28th; November 9th, and December 3rd, 1865.

Seen October 31st, 1866. Seen November 16th, 1867.

Young Swallows (in nest), first week in September.

Seen Oct. 18th, Nov. 1st, 4th, 1869.

Hirundo urbica.

Martin.

LOCAL NAME.	FIRST SEEN.	EGG OBSERVED.
<i>House Martin.</i>	May 5th, 1866.	June 11th, 1866.
	April 21st, 1868.	
	April 11th, 1869.	

1870.

The Martin is a very common species with us, though from the scarcity of available dates, it would seem the contrary to the reader. What this deficiency is owing to I am unable to say.

Before the Martins leave us in the autumn, they collect in flocks on the roofs of the houses : at this time occurs a great mortality amongst them,—they may be picked up dead on the ground, under the walls of all the buildings which they frequent. I have, however, been quite unable to discover the cause.

Dates of last observance of the Martin :

November 3rd, 1865.

November 12th, 1866.

Hirundo riparia.

Sand Martin.

FIRST SEEN.	EGG OBSERVED.
April 30th, 1866.	May 23rd, 1865.
April 13th, 1867.	May 15th, 1866.
April 8th, 1868.	June 15th, 1869.
April 8th, 1869.	

1870.

In the soft green sandstone, on which stands Savernake Station, is the only colony of these birds, which I know of for certain, in this neighbourhood. Here they are very abundant ; part of the colony is situated right in the Station so that all trains pass within a few yards of it, and yet the birds have not deserted the place.

They are occasionally seen nearer Marlborough, but not often.

On Martinsell, I have, during some years, noticed an abundance, so many in fact that I am inclined to think that they must breed somewhere near, but have been unable to find the place.

Cypselus apus.

Swift.

LOCAL NAMES.	FIRST SEEN.	EGG OBSERVED:
<i>Screech</i>	April 27th, 1865.	June 9th, 1865.
<i>Screech Devil</i>	April 25th, 1866.	May 9th, 1866.
<i>Screech Martin</i>	April 13th, 1867.	June 15th, 1869.
<i>Screamer</i>	April 22nd, 1868.	
	April 24th, 1869.	
	1870.	

The Swift visits us towards the end of April in tolerable abundance, always making itself heard by its loud harsh scream, which has procured for it so many names.

The common name of this bird indicates the "swiftness" of its flight, which would seem to make the following anecdote almost incredible. The hens in a certain poultry yard not far from Oxford always shewed a great dislike to the Swifts, which are particularly abundant there. In one instance, in June 1869, an old game hen with a fine brood of chickens suddenly made a dart at a Swift which was flying low and near the ground. The hen had to pass across a considerable distance before reaching the Swift.

By some means, however, it seized upon the poor bird and attacked it, stamping upon it with its feet and attempting to tear out its eyes. The Swift was rescued by a spectator, too late, however, to save its life, as it died in the course of an hour, and now enriches my collection.

Columba turtur.

Turtle Dove.

FIRST SEEN.	EGG OBSERVED.
May 30th, 1868.	May 9th, 1866.
	May 13th, 1867.
	May 29th, 1869.
	1870.

This elegant bird visits us in small numbers yearly, chiefly frequenting the Forest. A specimen in my collection was shot in a fir copse on the Overton downs, where the keepers say they are not uncommon.

Crex Pratensis.

Landrail.

LOCAL NAME.	FIRST SEEN.	EGG OBSERVED.
<i>Corncrake.</i>	April 26th, 1866.	April 25th, 1865.
	April 18th, 1867.	June 13th, 1866.
	April 22nd, 1868.	(hard set).
	April 24th, 1869.	June 13th, 1867.
		May 20th, 1868.
	1870.	1870.

This clever ventriloquist is in reality common, though it keeps itself so well concealed that it is but seldom seen though often heard.

Its eggs are observed nearly every year, though never in any great numbers as it chiefly breeds amongst growing corn.

PART III.—WINTER VISITORS.

Turdus pilaris.*Fieldfare.*

FIRST SEEN.

November 10th, 1865.

October 31st, 1866.

September 29th, 1867.

LAST SEEN.

March 27th, 1866.

April 18th, 1868.

This handsome thrush is one of our few winter visitors. It flies about in flocks during the time it is with us, during which season it is esteemed a great delicacy for the table, and is sold for about three-pence apiece. As will be seen from above it stayed with us very late indeed in the spring of 1868.

Turdus iliacus.*Redwing.*

FIRST SEEN.

November 28th, 1865.

October 31st, 1866.

This bird also visits us during the winter in considerable numbers.

Fringilla montifringilla.*Mountain Finch.*

LOCAL NAME.

SEEN.

Brambling.

March 1st, 1867.

Not one winter passes without a visit from one or more flocks of these beautiful birds. About January and February we generally have a spell of severe weather, and it is during this that they visit us. In fact the severer the weather the greater their numbers. In the early spring or late winter of 1867 large numbers appeared.

Scolopax Gallinula.*Common Snipe.**Gallinula*

A few of these birds visit us yearly, but very few, and in rapidly decreasing numbers.

They are occasionally to be seen in all our water meadows, but are most plentiful at Swindon reservoir.

*Why not the Jack Snipe?***Anas Boschas.***Wild Duck.*

Small flocks of these birds are occasionally to be found both at Ramsbury and at Swindon reservoir, but never in any large numbers. One or two instances of their remaining to breed with us have been reported.

Mr. Smith says of one—"A nest of this bird was found in 1857 in the low brushwood in Poulton Copse, at least half-a-mile from any water."

This closes the extremely short list of our winter visitors.

Why not the Teal?

PART IV.—SPRING AND AUTUMN VISITORS.

Otus brachyotus.*Short-eared Owl.*

A few of these Owls visit us every autumn, when they generally frequent the turnip-fields ; they are, however by no means common.

I have one in my collection which was shot on the Overton downs in spring, but this is the only recorded instance of its visiting us at that season.

Coturnix vulgaris.*Quail.*

“There is no rule without an exception,” is a good old adage and a true one. I therefore feel justified in not including this as a summer visitor, though its nest has been taken as late as the 21st of June (1868). This nest (the only recorded instance of their breeding with us) was built in a hay-field, and the poor bird sat so steadily on its nest that the scythe of one of the mowers actually cut the nest in half under her, also taking off her legs.

As a rule, however, they only visit us in the spring and autumn, while on their migrations, and even then they are by no means abundant.

In February, 1868, a very remarkable variety of the Quail was picked up dead and handed over to me by a keeper at Overton. It had evidently been dead some hours and had been lying in the pouring rain, so that it was hard to say what bird it was at first sight. After a good washing it displayed such curious markings on the throat, that my interest was aroused. At my request it was sent by the Rev. T. A. Preston to Professor Newton, whose answer was as follows.—“So far as I can judge, your bird is a common Quail, but I do not remember to have seen before one with so much black on its chin and throat. However, it is certain that Quails vary a good deal in the colouration of these parts, though I am at a loss to give a rational explanation of the manner in which they vary. It is possible that old males may assume a different plumage at this time of year. I have before had no experience of the fact, and nothing is said about it in any of the authors I have consulted. I think it would be well if you would shew your specimen to Mr. Gould, and hear what he has to say on the subject. I do not recollect to have examined a male Quail killed in the spring before. I have a specimen in which the black markings of your bird are replaced by a deep chesnut, and that I had supposed to be the colour of this part in the breeding plumage; but my bird was killed many years ago (fifty I should think) and no record of the time of year it was obtained has been kept. If you show your specimen to Mr. Gould, I hope you will kindly let me know what he says, as I am a good deal interested in your specimen.” The bird was then shown to Mr. Gould. who replied: “I have compared the Quail with the various specimens in my collection, and find it similar

almost to a feather, inclusive of the black throat, with Italian skins. Quails often have the markings of the throat brown where they are black in your specimen, but to what the difference is attributable has not yet been clearly ascertained. It is probably due to age or season."

I need only add that the length of this specimen was $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the tip of the bill to the tip of the tail, and the weight only two ounces, as it was in very poor condition.

This specimen is now in the College Museum.

PART V.—RARE AND OCCASIONAL VISITORS.

Haliaetos Albicilla.*White-tailed Eagle.*

Though Eagles are essentially birds of mountainous districts, it is rather remarkable that there is only one instance on record of their appearance in this neighbourhood, as from one cause or another hardly a year passes without one or more Eagles, either of the golden or of the white-tailed species, being recorded from the south of England.

Only one, however, has appeared here of late years. This specimen was observed high up in the air over Savernake Forest by a keeper, who immediately shot at it, and succeeded in bringing it down, when it proved to be a fine specimen of the white-tailed Eagle.

It was presented by its fortunate captor to the Marquis of Ailesbury, in whose possession it now is. This was in the year 1859.

A single specimen of the Golden Eagle has been shot at Littleton, which is however just beyond the limits of our district.

Falco Peregrinus.*Peregrine.*

Contrary to what I had at first intended, I have decided to place this in the present section, for though in the Orni-

thology of Wilts, published in the Wiltshire Magazine, it is said to be not uncommon on the downs of this county, from the fact of my never but once meeting with a specimen killed in this neighbourhood, I conclude that it is at any rate very rare near Marlborough.

This solitary specimen was shot on the Overton downs, I believe towards the end of January, 1867, but I am not quite certain of the date, as I omitted to make a note of it at the time. Of the year I am certain.

Falco subbuteo.

Hobby.

This bird is occasionally to be seen at Aldbourne, and also on the Overton downs, though it is at all times a great rarity with us.

Falco æsalon.

Merlin.

I only know of one instance of this beautiful little Hawk appearing here. It was shot on the hill called Liddington Castle, but I am sorry to say it figured in a "gamekeeper's museum."

[*Milvus vulgaris*.

Kite.

A pair of these birds are said to have built some years ago on the further side of Martinsell, but I am not certain of the correctness of this "*on dit*." A friend has also assured me that he saw one flying over Liddington Castle.]

Buteo lagopus.

Rough-legged Buzzard.

During the winter of 1866 the rabbit warren on the Overton downs was devastated by a large hawk, for which traps were for a long time set in vain. It seemed to bear a charmed life ; at last, however, it was found caught by the leg in a trap. It proved to be a splendid male of the present species.

Philomela lusciniæ.

Nightingale.

Pity the country which can only claim this exquisite songster as a "*rara avis*" ! Such it is with us.

An instance of its breeding with us has now been unknown for many years, and they are but very rarely heard. They are perhaps more abundant at Chisledon than elsewhere throughout the district.

Motacilla boarula.*Grey Wagtail.*

Has occasionally, but very rarely, been seen during the winter months, especially near the Kennet, but only one authentic instance of their breeding with us is recorded. A nest containing young birds was found on June 16th, 1867.

Coccothraustes vulgaris.*Hawfinch.*

This bird is perhaps commoner with us than it is in most places, though of late years it has appeared less frequent than it used to do.

At one time it used to breed plentifully in the Forest, as may be seen from the following notices :

Hawfinch, May 3rd, H. F. Boyd, and E. H. Carr. Two more nests were taken afterwards, May 15th. E. Edgell and E. A. King.

In August, 1867, two immature birds were killed in the garden of the Rev. J. F. Bright, at Preshute, thus showing that they still breed here.

Linota linaria.*Lesser Redpole.*

These birds are occasionally observed during the winter months, flying about the fields by the Swindon road. This is, however, only in severe winters.

Loxia curvirostra.*Crossbill.*

A flock of these birds was seen on the 12th of October, 1866, among the firs on Martinsell. Mr. Parker, bird-stuffer of this town, has also assured me of their occurrence in this neighbourhood.

Corvus corax.*Raven.*

The days have long gone by when this bird could be accounted a common species. I have never met with a Marlborough specimen, but the following account from the "Flora" list is authentic:—"A pair of these birds built for many years in succession in a magnificent clump of fir trees in the Forest, around which they might be heard croaking incessantly from the end of December, when nidification commences, to the end of March, when the young are usually able to leave the nest. The place has been deserted by them now for three years, owing to some inscrutable reason, as the year preceding their desertion they certainly reared three of their young in safety. The tree was scaled in 1857, and three out of six eggs were taken; of these three, two were perfectly fresh, while in the third there was a live bird. Thus it would appear that the Raven does what the Barn Owl has been observed to do frequently—viz., lay its eggs at considerable intervals, leaving those last laid to be hatched by the warmth of the young birds. Some eggs taken from the same nest several

years before were successfully hatched in a Rook's nest in the Wilderness. A pair of these birds may still not unfrequently be seen flying over the cricket ground." (This was written in 1863.)

Corvus cornix.

Hooded Crow.

LOCAL NAMES.

Beckhampton Grey Crow.

Royston Crow.

Grey Crow.

A few of these birds visit us now and then, when they are chiefly observed in the West Woods, or on the Downs.

Picus major.

Great Spotted Woodpecker.

This bird is not very uncommon in the Forest, though I know of no authentic instance of its breeding with us. Still a very young bird has been taken in the Forest, which leads me to suppose that its nest has been overlooked. This bird was fed and reared by hand. It, however, only lived about two months.

A pair were shot in 1867 on an apple tree in Mildenhall.

[**Picus minor.**

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker.

This is included in Mr. Smith's list of birds in the following words :—"This bird has been observed several times in the Forest, but its eggs have not yet been taken." As the Greater Spotted Woodpecker, the commoner species, is not mentioned, I am inclined to think a mistake has occurred."]

Caprimulgus europæus.

Goatsucker.

LOCAL NAMES.

Nightjar.

Fern Owl.

This remarkable bird is not common with us, though specimens have been procured from all parts.

Its nest has been taken once only in Rabley Copse on the 31st of May, 1865.

Perdix rufa.

Red-legged Partridge.

One single specimen of this bird was shot in the West Woods in November, 1865.

Otis tarda.

Great Bustard.

Though this noble bird is now unfortunately extinct as a resident, not only in Wiltshire, but throughout England, it may still be reckoned an occasional straggler, occurring more frequently in Wiltshire than in any other county, Norfolk excepted, on account of our extensive downs, where there is every reason to believe that it has been by no means rare, though at the same time probably never very common. In the *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine* appeared a most interesting paper on the Great Bustard, from which I give the following particulars. It appears to have been tolerably plentiful in Wiltshire till towards the end of the eighteenth century, from which time instances of its occurrence become rarer and rarer. In 1771 Dr. Brookes informs us that it still bred on Salisbury plain at that time, while in 1801 a nest containing two eggs was found on Market Lavington down. These instances, however, besides having occurred some time ago, did not occur within our present limits. There is one instance, however, which occurred as lately as January 1856 in Savernake Forest. Though I have myself conversed with the keeper who shot at this bird, as I could not gain any fresh information on the subject, I think it best to give the anecdote as nearly as possible in the words of the paper alluded to above. "Very early in January (1856) one of Lord Ailesbury's keepers, named King, seeing a large bird, which he could not recognise, but supposed to be an Eagle, flying over a part of Marlborough Forest called Henswood, fired a cartridge at it, though, from the distance, he had little

expectation of reaching it; he was not therefore disappointed to see the bird continue its flight apparently unharmed, and went away thinking no more of the matter. Subsequently, and apparently only a day or two after, a little boy of not more than seven years old, saw a large bird with a broken leg, and succeeded in capturing it." This latter part took place on the borders of Berkshire, but the writer of the paper continues, "ever since I gained intelligence of the keeper's shot, with a cartridge, (the leg was broken as if by ball) I have come to the conclusion that that shot took effect; and that the bird he fired at, and the one caught subsequently by the little boy, were one and the same, and therefore Henswood (the scene of the keeper's shot) being in Wiltshire I lay claim to the bird as a "bona fide" Wiltshire specimen, though I own it was so misguided as to cross the county to die in the county of Berkshire."

One was also shot in Savernake Forest, in 1849, and one at Chisledon in 1851.

Œdicnemus crepitans.

Great Plover.

LOCAL NAMES.

Norfolk Plover.

Stone Curlew.

EGG OBSERVED.

May 19th, 1868.

A few of these birds visit us nearly every year, and most probably breed with us. The eggs mentioned above were taken on the Overton downs, from where I have more than once had the young birds. They also used to breed

regularly, on the Whitefield Farm, on the left of the Swindon road. They have also been reported from Aldbourne.

Charadrius pluvialis.

Golden Plover.

During severe winter weather, flocks of these birds occasionally pass over us, though they very seldom alight in our district; so seldom, indeed, that I only know two instances of their being shot. Since writing the above an additional notice of a specimen shot in December, 1869, at Savernake, has been sent to me.

Charadrius morinellus.

Dotterel.

Tradition says that these birds were at one time not uncommon on our Downs, but these days have long ago passed away.

One in the possession of Mr. Willis, of Whitefield farm, was shot by himself out of a flock of fifteen in the spring of 1867 on his own farm, where I am told some are seen nearly every year.

Botaurus stellaris.

Bittern.

Here we have another case of a very noble bird exterminated by the spread of civilization. Mr. Parker, bird-

stuffer, of Marlborough, has given me information of two specimens of these birds killed many years ago ; he cannot recollect the exact date. One of the specimens is still in existence, for I have seen it myself in a house at Mildenhall.

The following anecdote is told of the capture of a Bittern at Preshute many years ago. The Preshute water meadows were at that time overgrown with ozers, &c. A spaniel, which was following its master through these, disappeared, and when called, came out of the rushes with a wound as of a dagger in its side. Immediately after, search was made, and a fine specimen of this bird was secured, which had evidently inflicted the wound with its beak in an attempt to defend itself against the attacks of the dog.

Numenius arquata.

Curlew.

“The eggs of this bird have been taken on Aldbourne downs.”

Such is the extract from the “Flora” List. I know nothing about the bird as a Marlborough species.

*These eggs were in all probability
Eggs of the A. H. curlew. (H. curlew)*

Totanus ochropus.

Green Sandpiper.

This is not a very uncommon visitor to this neighbourhood, indeed scarcely a year passes but a few specimens are either observed or shot. It arrives here about the beginning

of September, frequenting the pools in the Forest or on the downs. On being disturbed they fly away uttering their peculiarly shrill whistle. In the autumn of 1867 a flock of seven of these birds was observed for several weeks on the Rockley downs, one of which was shot and sent to me on the 3rd of September. On seeing this bird, which I then imagined to be the first killed in this neighbourhood, I hastened out to Rockley, where I saw the flock on the pond in the village itself.

I afterwards met with a pair of these birds on one of the small ponds in the Forest. Since that time I have had notices of their occurrence, and specimens have been shown me procured in the years 1863-7 inclusive.

Totanus hypoleucos.

Common Sandpiper.

Some of these birds visit us every summer, frequenting the pools and the river. Some have even been seen in the College bathing place. I know of no instance of their breeding with us.

Scolopax rusticola.

Woodcock.

A good many of these birds visit us during the winter, chiefly frequenting the West Woods. They are also occasionally seen in the Forest.

Scolopax gallinula.

Jack Snipe.

It is in very small numbers that these birds visit us. They are chiefly to be found at the Swindon Reservoir. I have one, however, in my collection which was shot on the Kennet, close to Marlborough.

Phalaropus lobatus.

Grey Phalarope.

During the autumn of 1866 a number of these birds appeared throughout England. One only, however, visited us. This specimen was shot at the end of September, at East Kennet, and was described in the local paper as a Stormy Petrel! Since writing the above another specimen has been shot by S. W. Featherstone, on the 4th of September, 1869, at Marlborough. This last mentioned specimen is in the hands of Mr. Parker, bird-stuffer, of Marlborough, and is, I believe, destined for the College Museum.

When the specimen was first procured it was believed to be the Red-necked species. This, however, proved an error, and I know of no instance of the occurrence of the last-named species in this neighbourhood.

Rallus aquaticus.

Water Rail.

Now and then some of these birds may be seen stealthily gliding in and out amongst the reeds and other water

plants, during the winter months. They never remain to breed with us.

Anas crecca.

Teal.

This also is an occasional, but rare, visitor. Its nest has never been found as far as I know, but from its having several times been seen in May and even June, I fancy that they sometimes breed on the Kennet.

Anas penelope.

Wigeon.

Round Silbury Hill several of these birds have been seen, but, at the same time, they are not common.

Fuligula clangula.

Golden-eye.

One of these birds was shot in the water-meadows at Mildenhall in 1866 (?) and is now in the possession of R. E. Price, Esq., of the Priory, Marlborough.

Podiceps rubricollis.

Red-necked Grebe.

During the floods at Manton some years ago, one of these birds was seen swimming close to the road in a kind of

bewildered state. It was captured in an open umbrella used as a fishing net.

Another was taken in a regular fishing net, in September, 1868.

Colymbus septentrionalis.

Red-throated Diver.

An immature specimen of this bird was picked up in an exhausted state by Mr. Willis, of Whitefield Farm, Ogbourne St. George, in January, 1866.

Another is said to have been obtained at the same place ten years before.

Mergulus melanoleucos.

Little Auk.

It is with great pleasure that I record an occurrence of this bird on the Kennet, just opposite the "Ailesbury Arms" on the Bath road, in 1864. The bird is now in the possession of Mrs. Gundry, of Netly Grange, Southampton.

It is very remarkable that a bird with such small wings should have come so far inland, but it is certainly true. This instance I have already recorded in the *Field*.

Sterna hirundo.*Common Tern.*

These are not uncommonly observed on the Canal, a few appearing every year. I have several Marlborough specimens in my collection, and there is at least one in the College museum.

Sterna arctica.*Arctic Tern.*

This species also occasionally appears, but not so often as the former. I have one specimen killed, in 1867, within a hundred yards of the College grounds.

Sterna fissipes.*Black Tern.*

I have an immature male of this species obtained at Ogbourne St. George by a keeper of the name of Rushen.

Uria alle.*Puffin.*

Since the completion of my M.S.S., I have received the following notice of the occurrence of this bird. A Puffin was caught by hand by George Scott (Postman), on the banks of the River Kennet, near the village of the same

name, on the 25th of October, 1869. He was walking along, and seeing this strange bird, got some help and caught it. It is presumed that it came with the rough weather in the middle of September, but there was no particular wind at the time it was taken. It was in a very poor condition and had probably been "living on nothing" for some time.

This specimen has been secured for the College Museum. A second specimen was afterwards picked up dead.

Larus canus.

Common Gull.

Though we are at some little distance from the sea it is by no means uncommon to see large flocks of Gulls flying overhead during high winds. I have given some little attention to these flocks, and, as mentioned elsewhere, find the Common Gull, true to its name here at least, to be far the most frequent species.

Towards the end of February, 1868, I was shewn five specimens of this bird, shot at intervals of two or three hours, and from the same flock apparently, in a line from west to east as far as Marlborough, and then turning southward. The following is the list of places at which these specimens were shot:—East Kennet, Clatford, Manton, Marlborough, and Tottenham House.

Again on the 19th of April, in the same year, a large flock passed over us in very much the same direction.

Larus fuscus.

Lesser black-backed Gull.

This is the rarest of the three species of Gull which sometimes visit us. Specimens have, however, been obtained at various times. One in my collection was shot in March, 1868, at Rockley.

Larus argentatus.

Herring Gull.

In Mr. Smith's list of Marlborough Birds, it is stated that this Gull often visits us. I cannot help thinking that there must be some mistake here, from the fact that among all the Gulls, which I have seen shot near Marlborough, I have only met with one specimen of this species, which was shot at Tottenham. As he, however, makes no mention of any other species, I suppose the birds flying overhead were referred to this species without sufficient examination.

Thalassidroma pelagica.

Storm Petrel.

The Rev. T. A. Preston has informed me of the fact that a specimen of this bird was seen by the Rev. T. W. Dowding in the garden of St. Peter's Rectory, Marlborough.

ADDENDA.

**Alauda arborea.***Wood Lark.*

FIRST SEEN.

May 29th, 1867.

EGG OBSERVED.

May 5th, 1865, (hard set).

May 21st, 1869.

This bird is mentioned in the "Flora" list, and I have many verbal notices of its occurrence, though I must confess that I have not met with it myself.

Lanius excubitor.*Grey Shrike.*

Since going to press a specimen of this bird shot at Poulton, on the 20th of November, 1869, by a keeper of the name of Rushen, has been submitted to me, and I am glad to be able to add this to my list.

APPENDIX.

These tables of notes have been drawn up from the Reports of the Marlborough Natural History Society, who kindly allowed me the use of them, and from private sources. They are authenticated (in the original sources) by the names of a large number of people, many of whom have kept up a diligent and unremitting search, so that between them they had a good chance of learning the *real* first dates of oviposition and arrival.

* These were heard *not* seen.

† These were young birds.

Page in Book	Bird	1865.		1866.		1867.		1868.		1869.	
		Egg.	Seen.	Egg.	Seen.	Egg.	Seen.	Egg.	Seen.	Egg.	Seen.
9	Kestrel	Ap. 21	..	Ap. 16	..	May 3	..	May 8	..	May 11	..
10	Sparrow Hawk.....	Ap. 26	..	Ap. 12	..	..	..	May 9	..	Ap. 29	..
11	Long-eared Owl	June 5	..	†Ap. 18	..	..	..	..	..	Mar. 20	..
12	White Owl	..	..	Ap. 26	..	..	..	†Ap. 22	..	May 8	..
13	Tawny Owl	Ap. 12	..	..	..	Mar. 3	..	†Ap. 29	..	†May 10	..
53	Red-backed Shrike ..	May 22	Ap. 10	May 6	..	May 29	..	..	..	May 27	..
53	Spotted Flycatcher...	May 23	May 19	..	..	†June 2	..	†May 30	..	May 27	..
14	Missel Thrush	Ap. 8	..	Mar. 28	..	Ap. 6	..	Mar. 16	..	Mar. 14	..
74	Fieldfare	..	Nov. 10	..	Oct. 31	..	Sept. 29	..	Ap. 18	..	Nov. 7
15	Song Thrush.....	Ap. 3	..	Mar. 25	..	Ap. 1	..	Mar. 18	..	Mar. 26	..
74	Redwing	..	Nov. 28	..	Oct. 22	..	..	..	..	..	Nov. 26
16	Blackbird	Ap. 10	..	Mar. 28	..	Ap. 4	..	Mar. 22	..	†Ap. 6	..

54 Ring Ouzel	Ap. 16	Ap. 30	...	...	...	...	May 4	Ap. 17	...	...	...
18 Hedge Accentor	Ap. 12	Ap. 4	...	...	Ap. 7	...	...	...	Ap. 16	...	...
19 Redbreast	Ap. 11	Ap. 2	...	...	Ap. 11	...	Mar. 29	...	Ap. 10	...	...
	(hard set)						(5 eggs)				
55 Redstart	Ap. 28	May 3	...	...	Ap. 29	Ap. 1	May 4	Ap. 13	Ap. 29	Oct. 31	
55 Stonechat	...	Ap. 28	...	...	...	...	May 14	Ap. 7	Ap. 25	...	...
56 Whinchat	May 27	+May 16	...	June 13	...	...	...	...	...	Ap. 24	
57 Wheatear	...	May 14	...	...	Mar. 27	...	...	Mar. 28	May 9	Ap. 8	
57 Grasshopper Warbler	May 23	May 30	...	May 28	*Mar. 26	...	...	...	...	...	...
		(hard set)									
58 Sedge Warbler	May 12	Ap. 30	...	...	May 12	...	Ap. 25	...	May 23	...	...
59 Reed Warbler	...	...	...	June 7	...	...	May 15	...	May 27	...	...
83 Nightingale	...	*May 8	...	...	*May 1	...	...	...	May 30	...	...
59 Blackcap	...	May 5	...	...	...	...	May 8	Ap. 22	May 8	...	...
60 Garden Warbler	May 26	May 26	...	...	...	...	...	...	May 15	...	...
61 Whitethroat	May 2	May 11	...	May 15	...	...	May 19	May 5	May 16	...	...
61 Lesser Whitethroat...	May 13	May 15	...	May 24	May 20	...	...	...	May 14	...	...
62 Wood Warbler	May 26	May 14	...	...	...	...	May 18	May 6	May 21	...	...
62 Willow Warbler	May 14	May 15	...	May 10	Ap. 15	May 4	Ap. 21	May 12	Ap. 11	...	...
63 Chiff-chaff	...	...	*Ap. 20	May 18	...	...	...	Mar. 29	May 10	...	...
20 Golden-crested Regulus	May 13	Ap. 30	...	Ap. 28	...	...	...	...	May 12	...	...
21 Greater Tit	Ap. 27	Ap. 26	...	Ap. 30	...	...	Ap. 16	...	Ap. 26	...	...
22 Blue Tit	Ap. 24	Ap. 22	...	Ap. 26	...	...	Ap. 13	...	April 24	...	...
22 Cole Tit	...	May 13	...	May 10	...	...	May 30	...	May 1	...	...
23 Long-tailed Tit	Ap. 24	Ap. 22	...	May 7	...	...	Ap. 19	...	Ap. 20	...	...

Page in Book	Bird	1865.		1866.		1867.		1868.		1869.	
		Egg.	Seen.	Egg;	Seen.	Egg.	Seen.	Egg.	Seen.	Egg.	Seen.
24	Pied Wagtail	.....	Ap. 27	..	Ap. 24 (hard set)	May 14... ..	...	May 10	...	Ap. 24	...
81	Grey Wagtail	.....	..	..	..	+June 16 ..	...	...	...	...	...
64	Ray's Wagtail	.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Ap. 24
65	Trec Pipit	.....	May 23	...	May 16 ..	Ap. 25	...	...	...	May 22	...
25	Meadow Pipit	.....	May 13	...	Ap. 29	May 25... ..	...	May 11	...	May 9	...
			(six eggs)								
26	Skylark	.....	Ap. 16	...	Ap. 20	Ap. 16	...	Ap. 30	...	Ap. 19	...
99	Wood Lark	.....	May 5	...	*Mar. 11 ..	May 29	...	...	...	May 21	...
			(hard set)								
26	Bunting	.....	June 20	...	May 12	June 13.. ..	...	...	...	...	...
27	Black-headed Bunting	.....	May 5	...	Ap. 30	June 13.. ..	...	...	...	May 9	...
29	Cirl Bunting	.....	June 1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
28	Yellow Bunting	.....	Ap. 17	...	Ap. 30	May 4	...	Ap. 15	...	Ap. 24	...
			nest & young Sept. 23								
29	Chaffinch	.....	Ap. 15	...	Ap. 20	Ap. 25	...	Ap. 26	...	Ap. 24	...
75	Mountain Finch	.....	...	...	...	...	Mar. 1	...	...	...	...
30	House Sparrow	.....	Ap. 17	...	+Ap. 19.. ..	May 8	...	Ap. 30	...	Ap. 24	...
31	Greenfinch	.....	May 3	...	Ap. 26	Ap. 30	...	May 8	...	Ap. 19	...
84	Hawfinch	.....	May 3	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
32	Goldfinch	.....	May 13... ..	...	May 29	May 3	...	May 21	...	May 10	...
32	Linnet	.....	Ap. 26	...	Ap. 14	Ap. 26	...	May 8	...	Ap. 25	...
84	Lesser Redpoll	.....	about May 10	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

33 Bullfinch	May 7	...	Ap. 28	...	...	...	...	...	...	May 13	...	...
85 Crossbill	...	...	...	...	Oct. 12	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
34 Starling.....	Ap. 24	...	Ap. 17	...	...	Ap. 24	...	...	Ap. 18	...	Ap. 19	...
34 Carrion Crow	May 12	...	May 12	...	...	Ap. 5	...	...	...	...	...	...
35 Rook	...	...	Mar. 19	...	...	Mar. 29	...	Mar. 17	...	Mar. 12	...	...
36 Jackdaw	Ap. 11	...	by Ap. 15	...	...	Ap. 20	...	Ap. 13	...	Ap. 21	...	...
37 Magpie	Ap. 8	...	Ap. 2	...	...	Ap. 13	...	Ap. 18	...	Ap. 22	...	...
38 Jay.....	Ap. 26	...	Ap. 18	...	...	Ap. 20	...	...	...	Ap. 20	...	...
39 Green Woodpecker	...	...	May 27	...	...	...	...	May 18	...	May 10	...	...
41 Creeper	Ap. 28	...	Ap. 26	...	...	May 2	...	May 4	...	May 1	...	...
42 Wren	May 3	...	Ap. 28	...	...	May 2	...	May 1	...	May 4	...	...
43 Nuthatch	Ap. 28	...	May 14	...	...	...	...	...	...	May 11	...	...
66 Cuckoo	...	*Ap. 8	May 15	Ap. 11	...	May 19	*Ap. 18	May 8	Ap. 8	May 13	Ap. 14	...
44 Kingfisher.....	...	Nov. 15	...	Aug. 19	...	May 24	Mar. 21	...	...	...	...	...
67 Swallow	Ap. 2 {	Mar. 28	Jun. 10 {	Ap. 1	...	{	Mar. 25	May 15	Ap. 3	May 29	{	Ap. 8
	Nov. 9	Nov. 9	Oct. 31	Oct. 31	...	{	Nov. 16	...	...	...	{	Nov. 11
68 Martin	...	Nov. 3	June 11	{	May 5	...	...	...	Ap. 21	...	{	Ap. 11
	...	...	Nov. 12	Nov. 12	...	...	...	...	...	...	{	Nov. 1
69 Sand Martin.....	May 23	...	May 15	Ap. 30	...	...	Ap. 13	...	Ap. 8	May 27	Ap. 8	...
70 Swift	June 9	Ap. 27	May 9	Ap. 25	...	...	Ap. 13	...	Ap. 22	June 15	Ap. 24	...
87 Goatsucker	May 31	May 2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
45 Ring Dove	Mar. 10	...	Ap. 18	...	...	Ap. 9	...	...	...	Ap. 12	...	...
	...	...	(hard set)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
45 Stock Dove	Ap. 11	...	Ap. 10	...	...	Ap. 16	...	Mar. 21	...	Ap. 20	...	...
71 Turtle Dove.....	May 30	...	May 9	...	...	May 17	...	...	May 30	May 29	...	...

Page in Book	Bird	1865.		1866.		1867.		1868.		1869.	
		Egg.	Seen.	Egg.	Seen.	Egg.	Seen.	Egg.	Seen.	Egg.	Seen.
46	Pheasant	May 23 ..	...	Ap. 29 ..	...	May 16 ..	...	May 5 ..	...	...	...
47	Partridge	May 23 ..	...	Ap. 2 ..	...	...	...	May 2 ..	...	...	...
77	Quail	...	...	...	...	...	...	June 15 Ap. 21	...	...	...
89	Great Plover	...	...	May 26 ..	...	...	Ap. 23	May 19 Ap. 15	Ap. 22	...	...
90	Golden Plover	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
48	Peewit	Ap. 20 ..	...	† Ap. 27 ..	...	Ap. 13 ..	...	Mar. 28 ..	...	Ap. 12	...
		(hard set)									
92	Common Sandpiper ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Ap. 20	...	Ap. 24
92	Woodcock	...	...	...	Nov. 3	...	Feb. 20	...	...	...	...
75	Common Snipe ..	...	Nov. 20	...	{ Ap. 17 Nov. 2	...	Mar. 24	...	...	...	Sep. 11
71	Land Rail	May 26 * Ap. 26	...	June 13 Ap. 26	...	June 13 * Ap. 18	May 20 Ap. 22	...	...	...	Ap. 24
				(hard set)							
93	Water Rail	...	...	...	Ap. 8 (!)	...	...	...	...	...	...
49	Moorhen	Ap. 13 ..	...	Ap. 11 ..	...	Ap. 9	...	Ap. 1	...	Ap. 9	...
50	Bald Coot	May 31 ..	...	May 4 ..	...	...	Feb. 15	...	...	...	...
75	Wild Duck	June 3 ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Ap. 23	...
51	Little Grebe	Ap. 29 ..	...	Ap. 26 ..	...	Ap. 23	...	Ap. 11	...	Ap. 7	...
				(hard set)							

I N D E X .

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ERRATA.

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- 15 Song Thrush, egg observed March 13th, 1868, (not March 16th).
 16 Blackbird, egg observed March 22nd, 1868, (not April 18th).
 young birds, April 6th, 1869.
 25 Meadow Pipit, egg observed April 29th, 1866, (not May 29th).
 26 Skylark, egg observed April 30th, 1868, (not April 10th).
 31 Greenfinch, egg observed April 26th, 1866, (not May 26th).
 32 Goldfinch, egg observed, May 29th, 1866, (not April 26th).
 Linnet, egg observed April 26th, 1865, (not April 25th).
 36 Jackdaw, egg observed April 21st, 1869, (not April 22nd).
 45 For *Columba ænas* read *Columba cænas*.
 48 Peewit, egg observed April 12th, 1869, (not April 14th).
 49 Moorhen, egg observed April 13th, 1865, (not April 15th).
 Last line but one, for *it* read *they*.
 51 Little Grebe, egg observed April 26th, 1866, (*hard set*).
 54 Ring Ouzel, first seen April 16th, 1865, (not April 10th).
 55 Redstart, *egg observed* April 28th, 1865, (not *first seen*).
 56 Line 7, for *are* read *is*.
 Whinchat, egg observed May 27th, 1865, (not May 22nd).
 young birds, May 16th, 1866.
 seen April 24th, 1869, (not *egg observed*).
 57 Wheatear, egg observed May 9th, 1869, (not May 19th).
 60 Garden Warbler, egg observed May 26th, 1865, (not May 25th).
 67 Swallow, egg observed May 5th, 1868, (not 1867).
 68 Line 22, add Nov. 11th.
 69 Sand Martin, egg observed May 27th, 1869, (not June 15th).
 71 Turtle Dove, add "egg observed May 30th, 1865."
 May 17th, 1867, (not May 13th).
 Land rail, egg observed May 26th, 1865, (not April 25th).
 74 Redwing, first seen, October 22nd, 1866, (not October 31st).
 75 Line 11, for *Gallinula* read *gallinago*.
 81 Line 2, for *Haliætos*, read *Haliaëtos*.

MARLBOROUGH:
CHARLES PERKINS, PRINTER,
TIMES OFFICE.

* The Birds of Marlborough: being a Contribution to the Ornithology of the District. By Everard Im Thurn. London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co.

THE good example which was set by Harrow, and imitated more ambitiously by Eton, has now been followed by Marlborough, and it is extremely gratifying to notice the beneficial result which is accruing from the establishment of natural-history clubs at our public schools. When we consider the obvious advantages which attend the scheme, we cannot but anticipate its more general adoption.

A society once formed by the enrolment of those in the school who may be willing to join, and an able president and secretary elected, the *modus operandi* is simple enough. Certain days are fixed for "field days," and certain evenings for "meetings." On a field day the president directs the excursionists according to the particular "ology" or branch of science which each may have selected; assisting discrimination between what is useful and useless, naming the plant, bird, or insect pointed out to him, or suggesting the preservation of particular specimens for examination and determination at home; in fine, teaching by the wayside instead of in the study. Each member of the society then makes a list of such species as he may have met with during the excursion, adding what notes may occur to him with reference to the rarity or otherwise of any particular species, its local distribution, diversity of habit, or peculiarity of growth or colour. These lists are then handed to the secretary, who arranges them methodically, and reads them in the shape of a report at the ensuing evening meeting. The president then invites a discussion, and directs attention to such works as bear upon the subject discussed, suggesting a reference to them in leisure time, or, if not in the school library, proposing their purchase. From the materials thus furnished to the secretary, a quarterly report may be printed for circulation in the school, the selection of matter being referred to the president, or, better still if practicable, to a committee of publication.

In this way much interesting information may be preserved in the annals of a school, and a foundation possibly laid for the publication at some future time of a valuable fauna or flora.

But a good deal will depend upon the system adopted in publishing

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But a good deal will depend upon the system adopted in publishing the reports, and to the office of president will attach no little responsibility. This remark may be illustrated by a glance at the little work which has just emanated from Marlborough. It is exclusively devoted to a notice of the birds which have been found within a radius of eight miles from the town of Marlborough. This limit was fixed by the author as he tells us in his preface, "for three reasons: 'firstly, because this is about the furthest distance which the generality of pedestrians would accomplish in an ordinary walk, and it therefore includes all the birds which Marlburians are likely to meet with; secondly, because that distance embraces the whole of the very interesting district of Savernake Forest; and, lastly, because the same limits will be used in the next edition of the Flora of Marlborough,'" which was published a few years since.

The number of birds recorded from this district amounts to one hundred and twenty-seven only, and these are classed by the author as follows: residents, 48; summer visitors, 27; winter visitors, 5 (!); spring and autumn visitors, 2 (!); and rare and occasional visitors, 45. The author's first mistake, we think, is made in this mode of grouping his species, for practically such an arrangement is found to be very inconvenient. Until the character which a particular species assumes in the particular locality is ascertained, one does not know where to look for it, and that character is perhaps the very point upon which information is desired.

Taking the list, however, as we find it, we are surprised to notice such a remarkable paucity of periodical visitors. To the five which are reported to appear in winter, namely, the fieldfare, redwing, brambling, common snipe, and wild duck, we should certainly have expected to find added the golden plover, woodcock, jacksnipe, teal, widgeon, and pochard; but all of these, except the pochard, are included (we imagine by mistake, amongst the rare and occasional visitors. *Apropos* of the woodcock, the name of "sea woodcock" has surely been bestowed in error upon the little grebe. We have always heard this name on the coast applied to the bar-tailed godwit, doubtless in consequence of its long bill, mottled plumage, and excellent flavour when roast.

The hawfinch, we observe, is excluded from the list of residents, and placed amongst the rare and occasional visitors, although we are told that it is "commoner here than in most places," and "at one time used to breed plentifully in the forest." In the same category we find the common sandpiper, notwithstanding that it is stated to "visit us every summer, frequenting the pools and rivers." Doubtless this bird would be more properly classed with the green sandpiper amongst the spring and autumn visitors, and the same remark may be applied to the terns. The eggs of the curlew (*Numenius arquata*) are stated to have been taken on Aldbourne Downs; but we have little doubt that these were the eggs of the stone curlew or thick-knee (*Edicnemus crepitans*). We regret to find that the author has missed a good opportunity of giving us a history of the great bustard in Wiltshire, a species which for some years past has been extinct as a resident in the British islands. It is true that we are referred to a paper on the subject in the *Wiltshire Archeological Magazine*; but, as this periodical is not in the hands of every ornithologist, a reprint in the present little treatise would have been appropriate and acceptable. We should have been glad, also, to learn something beyond the mere reference to it, about the heronry at Bowood, the seat of the Marquis of Lansdowne. This locality is not mentioned by Yarrell in the list of heronries given in his second volume, latest edition, and a record of its history, size, and situation would be certainly worth preserving.

It must not be supposed, however, because we point out the most noticeable defects in the book before us, that we do so in any but the most friendly spirit. Our observations are intended rather as hints for future editions, and for future works of the same character.

It is not to be expected that a boy should turn author before leaving school; neither is it reasonable to suppose that at so early an age he could be thoroughly master of the subject on which he writes. Under the circumstances, it must be admitted that the little work before us is a credit not only to the author, but to the society of which he is so worthy a member.

J. E. H. in the Field

30.4.1870

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